Commentary

Volume Seventy-five, Number One, January 1983

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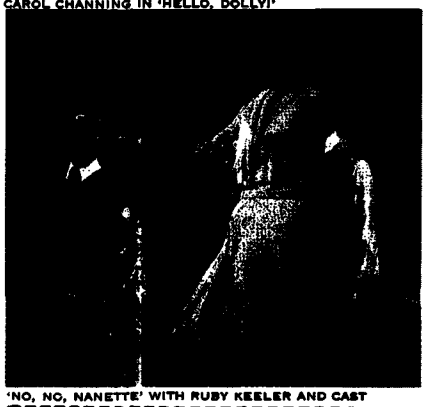

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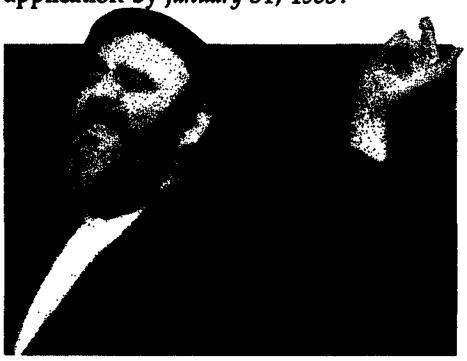

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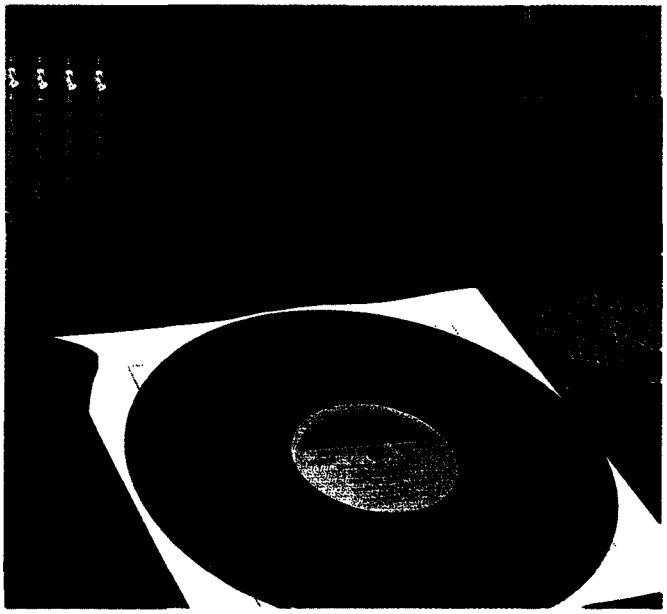

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Commentary

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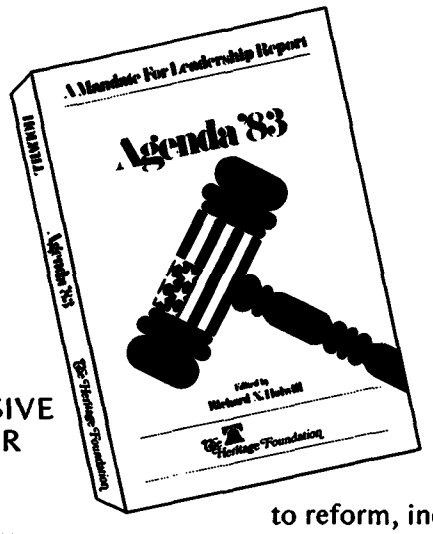

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Letters from Readers

The Cuban Missile Crisis

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

While Peter W. Rodman's article on the Cuban missile crisis ["The Missiles of October: Twenty Years Later," October 1982] is original and thought-provoking, he seems to have swallowed several of the delusions which have become incorporated in the standard (or "Camelot") version of the affair.

For example, is it true that Khrushchev was defeated and that the Soviets "lost" and America "won"? Let us see. Khrushchev started from Square One in which he knew himself to be way behind in strategic nuclear capacity and way behind in conventional capacity, except in Europe. Bluffing magnificently, he aimed for a huge increase in his nuclear capability by installing the missiles in Cuba. He had only one real asset in the theater of the operation—Fidel Castro.

After the crisis was over, he was back to Square One, and nothing had changed. Or had it? The United States, as part of the price for withdrawing the Soviet missiles, agreed, without consulting Turkey, Italy, or NATO, that all land-based Jupiter medium-range ballistic missiles, which were a real danger to the USSR, would be taken down and removed in six months. Turkey, Italy, and NATO realized full well that the Soviet missiles had been taken out of Cuba at the cost of European security, without even a by-your-leave. And more; the United States promised formally and openly never to invade Castro's Cuba—a promise which might mean nothing to a state like the USSR, but which was a real inhibition on a state like the United States. And, as icing on the cake, Castro refused to allow the international inspection of the missile withdrawal which the superpowers had agreed on, and he got away with it. . . . Thus the Soviets got out of Cuba as far as the missiles were concerned, but stayed in every other way; and they retreated with three prizes for their audacity. If that is losing, it would be interesting to see the Soviets *win* a crisis.

The Camelot mythmakers, with whom Mr. Rodman seems implicitly to agree, would reply to this analysis that JFK had earlier ordered the removal of the Jupiter missiles because they were obsolete, that America did not intend to invade Cuba anyway, and that international inspection of the Cuban missile removal turned out to be unnecessary. But there is no evidence whatever that the President had earlier ordered the Jupiters to be taken down; the whole story was apparently concocted after the crisis to make it appear that a major concession by the U.S. was not a concession at all. In the unlikely event that the President had issued such an order in early 1962, it was a strange order indeed, made without any consultation with Turkey, Italy, or NATO, and affecting as it did not U.S. government forces and installations, but the weapons inventory of allied foreign forces, who were not in any way obligated to jump when the U.S. President whistled. (As it happened, it cost us more than $300 million in other military goodies to persuade Turkey to dismantle its Jupiter missiles —obsolete, of course—by an iron deadline which by the merest chance happened to be just six months to the day after the Cuban missile accord.) It was also a strange order by virtue of its short-sighted stupidity. Recall that at present the U.S. is trying desperately to put theater-nuclear missiles into Europe under NATO auspices. The idea is not new. Such weapons were there in the 50's and 60's. If the Jupiters were obsolete, why couldn't they have been replaced with more modern missiles, instead of being removed under the pitiful excuse that Polaris weapons, useless for anything but city-busting, were now on station under exclusive American command and control?

With regard to the self-limiting promise not to take direct military action against Cuba—is anyone prepared to argue that Castro's subsequent flagrant defiance of the United States would have been quite the same without this guarantee? . . .

What a pity that such a knowledgeable and perceptive observer as Mr. Rodman has only picked around the edges of the received official version of what happened twenty years ago and its relevance to American security today.

JOHN W. BOWLING
Troy State University
Troy, Alabama

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PETER W. RODMAN writes:

Critical as I am of the Kennedy administration's performance in and after the Cuban missile crisis, I find the notion that the Soviets really "won" the encounter difficult to accept. It was universally perceived even in the Communist world that the removal of the missiles was a humiliation for the Soviet Union: the Chinese denounced Khrushchev for "capitulationism" and the affair was one of the "hare-brained schemes" for which he was ousted two years later. His argument that he had secured Cuba against invasion did not seem to impress his comrades. The famous candid quote of V.V. Kuznetsov which foreshadowed the Soviet military build-up—"You Americans will never be able to do this to us again!"—hardly suggests that the Soviets saw it as a triumph.

That the United States, in the long run, paid a huge price for missing opportunities in the crisis and lulling itself into complacency afterward is, of course, the whole point of my article. John W. Bowling seems to agree, but I believe he misses the point of what the real problem was: not the precise terms of the "understanding," but the preconceptions which underlay the Kennedy administration's foreign policy generally, which it mistakenly saw as vindicated in the crisis, and which led to even more mistaken decisions in its aftermath. Mr. Bowling is correct, for example, that the removal of the land-based Jupiter MRBM's, jointly operated by the U.S. and its allies, and their replacement by U.S. Polaris submarines, only opened up the problem we are facing today of having to redress the "decoupling" effect of sea-based systems. But this reflects something bigger than Cuba; the real problem was the political blindness of the systems-analysis methodology that dominated too many decisions during the period. In this case, whether or not the order had been given, George W. Ball's most recent book makes clear that the administration was determined to replace the Jupiters with SLBM's and would eventually have done so even without a Cuban crisis.

I continue to believe that the principal harm done by the crisis was the complacency it fostered in the policy-makers of the time—the missed opportunity to sever the Cuban-Soviet military connection, the illusions of a new turn toward peace, the smug misjudgments about the strategic balance, the pedantic theories of crisis management later misapplied in Vietnam. Even with a no-invasion pledge, these errors need not have been committed. The administration came out of the crisis with some of the same soft-headed attitudes that tempted the Soviets to think they could get away with such an adventure in the first place. This is a much more fundamental indictment of the Kennedy and Johnson policies. Nothing agreed to in October 1962 required us to halt our strategic missile construction a few years later or to fight the Vietnam war stupidly.

Likewise, no Cuban "deal" prevented us from taking forceful action to block the Soviet-Cuban takeover in Angola thirteen years later. The United States remains free to act in its supreme national interest against any new Soviet or Cuban threat, just as President Kennedy acted against the missiles in Cuba without the benefit of any pre-existing "understanding" that they shouldn't be there. No tactical victory will ever relieve us of the permanent responsibility of understanding our interests and defending them with vigilance and determination. Perhaps this is the final "lesson" of the Cuban crisis.

The Black Book

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

From its very start Joshua Rubenstein's article, "The Black Book" [September 1982], disquieted me. I felt as if I were looking at a blurred and unfocused photograph of a familiar face, trying unsuccessfully to make out its true features. For Mr. Rubenstein has, I regret to say, skewed both facts and interpretation in retelling the history of *The Black Book*, the documentary collection about the murder of the Soviet Jews during World War II whose publication Stalin suppressed shortly after the war ended.

Mr. Rubenstein opens his article with the comment that the murder of the Soviet Jews under the German occupation during World War II has not been as well documented

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as the murder of the Jews elsewhere in Europe. The reason for that, he explains, is "mainly because the Soviet government has been reluctant to acknowledge that the Jews were the primary victims of Nazi hatred." What a strangely polite way to describe the Soviet Union's official and calculated policy of *denying* that the Jews were singled out as the particular targets of the Nazis. This policy, from its inception in 1946, was rooted in official Soviet anti-Semitism and has since then been nourished by anti-Semitism at the grass roots as well as at the highest levels of the Communist party.

The erasure of the Holocaust from Soviet history and its anti-Semitic motivations have been well documented. An excellent source is Yehoshua A. Gilboa's *The Black Years of Soviet Jewry: 1939-1953*, which Mr. Rubenstein would have found most informative, had he consulted it. Another account of this ugly chapter in Soviet anti-Semitism appears in my book, *The Holocaust and the Historians*. The Soviet denial of the Holocaust has been no esoteric matter. It became a public scandal some twenty years ago, when Yevgeny Yevtushenko in his poem "Babi Yar" proclaimed to all the world that "there are no memorials at Babi Yar" to mark the graves of the murdered Jews. In 1976, the Soviet authorities finally erected a monument on the site of the Babi Yar massacres. But it did not memorialize the Jews. The inscription describes the dead as "100,000 citizens of the city of Kiev and prisoners of war."

The Soviet erasure of the murder of the Jews from the annals of World War II was no mere "reluctance" on the part of the Soviet regime to mention an unpleasant matter. In fact, one of the first casualties of this anti-Semitic policy was the very *Black Book* which is the subject of Mr. Rubenstein's article. Since then, Soviet anti-Semitism has continued to flourish and its propaganda with regard to the Holocaust now exceeds all bounds of decency as well as reason. The current party line has it that the Jews were accomplices of the Nazis and hence responsible for murdering themselves.

Mr. Rubenstein's account of the history of *The Black Book* also needs fundamental correction. The book did have its institutional origins in the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee, as he says, but his single paragraph about the creation of that committee is mischievously misleading. He writes: ". . . Stalin had allowed the formation of the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee to reinforce the support of Western Jews for the wartime alliance." What a strange formulation! Mr. Rubenstein makes it appear as if a group of Soviet Jews got together to create this committee and Stalin "allowed" them to do so because it was a patriotic undertaking. Does Mr. Rubenstein think that in the Soviet Union private people are allowed to form voluntary organizations as they do in the United States?

The true story of the origin of the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee is more chilling. The committee was in fact the creation of the NKVD, the Soviet secret police now called the KGB. I told that story in COMMENTARY more than thirty years ago ["Two of Stalin's Victories," December 1951]. But I suppose every generation must learn the story of the past for itself.

In brief: the origin of the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee is indissolubly linked to the murder by the Soviets of Henryk Erlich and Victor Alter, the leaders of the Jewish Socialist Bund of Poland, who as refugees from Warsaw had been arrested in Vilna by the Soviet police in 1939, shortly after the outbreak of the war. In September 1941, a few months after Nazi Germany invaded the Soviet Union and turned its former ally into an adversary, Erlich and Alter were released from prison. A top NKVD agent proposed to them that they head a worldwide Jewish committee against fascism. They agreed to draft a plan for such an organization and their proposal was submitted to Lavrenti Beria himself, then the head of the secret police. Beria informed them that the plan would have to be approved personally by Stalin. Erlich and Alter then wrote a letter to Stalin to accompany their memorandum. On December 3, 1941, they were summoned by the NKVD and never returned.

Two years later, the Soviet Ambassador informed the president of the American Federation of Labor (who had pressed inquiries regarding their whereabouts) that both men had been executed back in December 1941 for "active subversive work against the Soviet Union." It is generally believed that they were shot on Stalin's personal order. No doubt their proposal for a free and independent international organization did not conform to Stalin's design.

When the NKVD finally did create the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee, they put at its head—at least nominally and publicly—the Yiddish poet Itzik Fefer and the actor Solomon Mikhoels, who did what was expected of them. (Their loyalty was rewarded in characteristic Stalinist style: Mikhoels was brutally killed in a mysterious accident which, as Stalin's daughter later disclosed, her father had ordered and which the secret police carried out; Fefer was among the host of Yiddish writers who were murdered in the final purge of Yiddish cultural figures in August 1952.) A leading member of the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee was Ilya Ehrenburg, writer and journalist, the foremost house Jew of the Stalinist regime. No one has yet evaluated Ehrenburg's role both in regard to Stalin and to his fellow Jewish writers, but surely it can have been no mere coincidence that in the very year the Yiddish writers were murdered, Ehrenburg was awarded the Stalin Prize.

Mr. Rubenstein, relying on the rambling and uncritical introduction to *The Black Book* prepared by the former director of Yad Vashem's Archives, attributes the initiative for *The Black Book* to Ehrenburg. I myself believe that the driving force behind the project was more likely Vasily Grossman, a colleague of Ehrenburg's, who is credited with co-authorship of *The Black Book*. Grossman probably did most of the work—collecting the documents, editing them, and preparing them for publication. I presume that Grossman counted on Ehrenburg's political connections and influence to facilitate the book's publication.

This is not to deny that Ehrenburg, for all his opportunism, his shiftiness, and his talent for keeping his head while landing on his feet during all the topsy-turvy turns of the party line, was not profoundly affected by the murder of the Jews. Yet it would be wrong to think that Ehrenburg's hatred of the Nazis and his compassion for the murdered Jews were the only reasons he participated in this project. In this instance, as in all the other instances, he was serving his Stalinist masters.

In those war years a book of this sort fulfilled the needs of Soviet

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propaganda, as did the organization of the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee itself. These activities were intended to rally support for the Soviet war effort not only among Jews within the country but also among Jews abroad. The martyrdom of the Soviet Jews under the German occupation was to be used in the interests of the regime at that particular time. And the history of that martyrdom was to be edited to fit the requirements of Soviet propaganda. We see this most nakedly in a 61-page booklet *Merder fun felker* ("Murderers of Nations"), which Ehrenburg published in 1944, drawing upon the material that was then still being collected. There Ehrenburg hewed to the party line as prescribed for this subject:

> Except for an insignificant scattering of traitors, the Soviet citizens who fell into the clutches of the occupiers remained true to the high ideals of the Stalinist Constitution. Risking their lives, the Russians, White Russians, Ukrainians hid Jews. . . . In the fire of these great trials, the friendship of nations of Soviet Russia was forged.

One needs no great political acumen to recognize that these statements conformed more closely to the dictates of Soviet propaganda than to the standards of historical truth.

Active collaborationism on the part of many ethnic groups within the Soviet Union, including Russians themselves, was a common phenomenon during the war even though it has been an "unsubject" in Soviet historiography. Accounts of such collaboration, especially with regard to the murder of the Jews, are almost entirely absent from *The Black Book*. An occasional reference to a collaborator, as for instance, in the history of the Minsk ghetto, depicts him as a totally atypical Soviet citizen: ". . . a former member of the White Army, a thief, a rapist, and murderer." But there were collaborators who had been party members and, even more ominous, there were collaborators who were admitted to party membership after the war.

Even in its present incarnation, with the imprimatur of Yad Vashem, *The Black Book* still reflects the exigencies of Soviet propaganda during World War II. That makes this book flawed history. It also explains why the Soviet authorities prohibited its publication once the war had ended. For by that time, Soviet goals and policies had changed. Soviet leaders were no longer interested in Jewish support. They were now making distinctions between bad Germans—those who lived in West Germany—and good Germans—those who lived in East Germany.

For those skilled in reading documents produced under conditions of totalitarian censorship, *The Black Book* does offer a useful compendium of information about the fate of the Jews in the Soviet Union during the war. But the propaganda which embellishes the documentation needs first to be strained out before this book can be regarded as a fair presentation of historical reality. Mr. Rubenstein's hyperbolic enthusiasm for this book—including his judgment that it was a "courageous document"—reflects a credulity in reading Soviet materials rather than an understanding of the book's origins and purpose. He seems altogether to be unaware of the fundamental problem inherent in writing for publication in the Soviet Union or in any dictatorship. Writers who wish to be published under conditions of stringent external censorship often impose upon themselves an equally stringent internal censorship. Such works have, therefore, to be read as much for what they leave unsaid as for what they say.

Also Mr. Rubenstein's account of the 1946 American publication of *The Black Book* is hopelessly muddled as well as distorted. The story, in brief, is as follows. Since *The Black Book*, from the start, was intended to serve Soviet propaganda purposes, an international *Black Book* Committee was formed, to consist of the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee in Moscow, the World Jewish Congress, the Vaad Leumi in Jerusalem, and the American Committee of Jewish Writers, Artists, and Scientists in New York, the last a Communist-front organization. Arrangements began to be made from Moscow for joint publication: in the Soviet Union in Russian and Yiddish, in the United States in English, and in Palestine in Hebrew. In mid-1944 Ehrenburg had sent the American Committee of Jewish Writers, Artists, and Scientists the material that was then being prepared for the Russian edition. The New Yorkers went ahead with the plans to publish and had even invited Albert Einstein to write a preface. That 560-page book appeared in 1946 as *The Black Book: The Nazi Crime Against the Jewish People*. (For history buffs: Hannah Arendt reviewed it—quite unfavorably—in COMMENTARY, September 1946.) It bears little resemblance to the suppressed Moscow *Black Book*, because the New York group added new materials of its own and the Moscow manuscript continued to undergo editorial addition and change.

As Mr. Rubenstein notes, the American *Black Book* did not use Einstein's preface. But Einstein himself published the text in his book *Out of My Later Years* (1950) under the title "Unpublished Preface to a Blackbook," without further identifying the book. In that preface Einstein had stated that "percentagewise the Jewish people have lost more than any other people affected by the disasters of recent years." Consequently, he argued, "if a truly just settlement is to be striven for, the Jewish people must be given special consideration in the organization of the peace." One readily understands why the American fellow-travelers jettisoned the preface. Even while enjoying the warmth of American freedom, they were extremely sensitive to the chill winds blowing from Moscow.

Mr. Rubenstein's infatuation for *The Black Book* has led him also to make an unwarranted claim for it. I refer to his rash assertion that Vasily Grossman "was the first person anywhere to write about Treblinka." Grossman visited the camp site in September 1944, about a year after the Germans had destroyed the camp and obliterated its traces. He wrote a pamphlet called *The Treblinka Hell*, but that was not the first piece about Treblinka. The first was by Yankiel Wiernik, an inmate of Treblinka. Employed at the camp as a carpenter, he managed to keep out of the gas chambers. In August 1943, after a year's incarceration, he joined the uprising of the Jewish slave laborers which ended with the camp's destruction. Wiernik, one of some fifty survivors, succeeded in fleeing to Warsaw. There, at the behest of the Jewish underground, he wrote down his experiences. His account, *A Year in Treblinka*, was published in May 1944 in Warsaw, in Polish, in an edition of 2,000 copies. Shortly thereafter, the Jewish Labor Bund in New York published an English version. Wiernik's essay is still the classic work about Treblinka.

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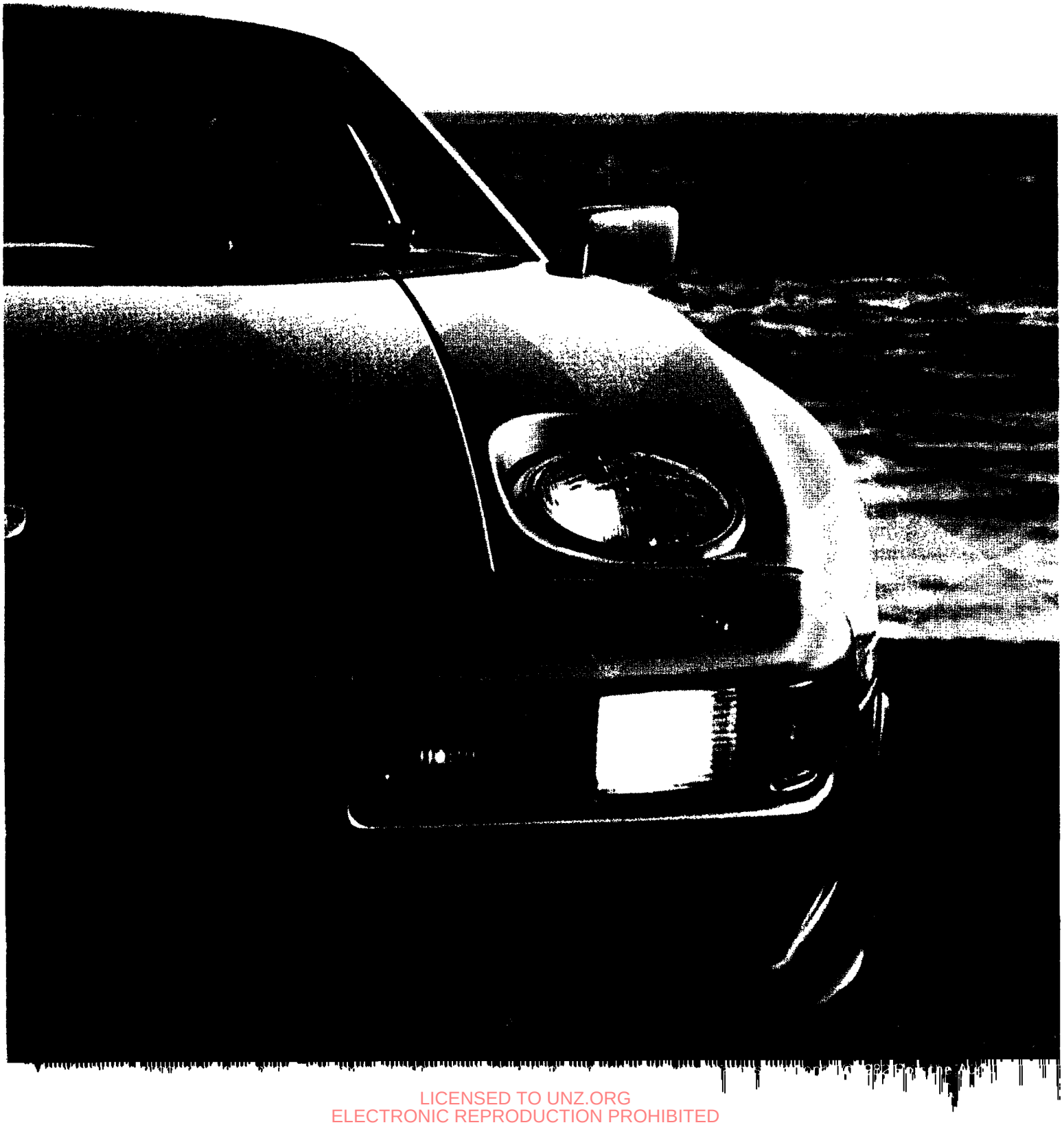

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Finally I arrive at my last stop, "Vilnius," the capital of the Lithuanian Soviet Socialist Republic. Mr. Rubenstein identifies it as the birthplace of the Yiddish poet Abraham Sutzkever. Presumably he would also identify it as the seat of the Vilnius Gaon. Ah, Napoleon, what has become of our Jerusalem of Lithuania?

LUCY S. DAWIDOWICZ
New York City

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

In connection with Joshua Rubenstein's article, it should be pointed out that Vasily Grossman was probably not "the first person anywhere to write about Treblinka." In May 1944, there appeared in Warsaw a clandestine pamphlet (in Polish), entitled *Rok w treblince* ("A Year in Treblinka"), written by Yankiel Wiernik, one of the surviving participants of the Treblinka uprising of August 2, 1943. This pamphlet was sent to London via underground channels on May 24, 1944. A Yiddish translation was published in New York later that year. The English version of Wiernik's essay (1945) has been recently reprinted in *The Death Camp Treblinka*, edited by Alexander Donat (Holocaust Library, 1979). A volume containing the Grossman and Wiernik accounts (both in Yiddish) was published in Buenos Aires in 1946.

GASTON L. SCHMIR
Yale University
New Haven, Connecticut

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

I would like to thank Joshua Rubenstein for mentioning my book, *Jewish Partisans: A Documentary of Jewish Resistance in the Soviet Union During World War II* (University Press of America, 1982). His article convinced me that these partisan accounts are indeed the "Yellow Book," or portions of it, that Ilya Ehrenburg planned to publish. I believe this—first, because the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee compiled the partisan accounts; second, because Ehrenburg contributed a final closing statement to the book; third, because the Hebrew version by Binyamin West appeared a few years after Abraham Sutzkever delivered the manuscript to Yad Vashem in 1965 and West thanks Yad Vashem in his Hebrew introduction; and finally, because the book was originally published in Russian, not Yiddish.

I think this was a subtle yet profound statement by the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee that the heroic acts of the Jews should be known by the non-Jewish Russian audience and not simply by Jews. Anti-Semitism was rising in official circles in the late 1940's and was to culminate in the July 11-18, 1952 secret trial of twenty-five Yiddish writers, theater people, a trade-union leader, a scientist, and other notable Jewish figures. Of these, only one escaped the death penalty: the renowned scientist Lina Shtern. Among those executed were David Bergelson, Itzik Fefer, Dovid Hofshtein, Leib Kvitko, Peretz Markish, Yitzhak Nusinov, Benjamin Zuskin, and Shmuel Persov. . . .

For various political reasons, the Soviet leaders wanted to wipe out not only any trace of Jewish resistance to Nazism but to erase any mention of the Holocaust in general as it pertained to Jewish life. They must no longer be allowed to do so! As Morris U. Schappes notes in an essay, "The Martyred Soviet Yiddish Writers" (*Jewish Currents*, May 1980): ". . . We seek from Soviet authorities full recognition . . . of the special role of Jews in the Hitler Holocaust that led to the death of 2 million of the 5 million Soviet Jews, 40 percent of the Soviet Jewish population—proportionately greater than that of any other Soviet nationality, and fully 9 percent of the total Soviet losses of 23 million. . . ."

One must also add that Jewish partisans likewise ranked high in the number of soldiers given medals for bravery against the German invaders: fourth in number, after the Russians, Ukrainians, and Byelorussians. Almost 124,000 Jewish soldiers and officers were awarded military medals and titles and 105 Jews received the very highest distinction, Hero of the Soviet Union. What a sad and humiliating reward they received after the war by the very nation that needed their valor to save itself from the Nazi onslaught! My father Irving Porter (Yisroel Puchtik) was one of those who received a medal, but he would have traded it in for a ticket to Palestine without batting an eye. . . .

JACK NUSAN PORTER
Ukrainian Research Institute
Harvard University
Cambridge, Massachusetts

JOSHUA RUBENSTEIN writes:

I would like to thank Gaston L. Schmir and Lucy S. Dawidowicz for calling attention to Yankiel Wiernik's account of Treblinka and for correcting my mistaken belief that Vasily Grossman was the first person to write about the camp. I am also glad to have Jack Nusan Porter's letter, since I was able to refer to *Jewish Partisans*, the book he edited for English publication, only in a footnote.

I appreciate Mrs. Dawidowicz's desire to provide a more detailed history of the origins of the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee and how *The Black Book* was put together (in New York) in 1946. But in trying to understand how individual Jews like Ilya Ehrenburg or Solomon Mikhoels conducted themselves during this period, Mrs. Dawidowicz and I seem to take a different approach. I prefer not to see the Soviet Union, even under Joseph Stalin, as a place where individuals are compelled to behave only in response to directions from above. People preserve internal motives of their own. And during World War II especially, individuals had a great deal more opportunity to act in line with their own values, if only because of the Nazi threat. The history of the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee is troubling and complex; it is unwarranted oversimplification, in my view, to ascribe everything done by Mikhoels, Ehrenburg, and Itzik Fefer (or the physicist Pyotr Kapitsa, who is not Jewish but who also joined the Committee) as simply a response to NKVD commands. In the case of Ehrenburg, who is the most controversial figure of all, I think his internal motives with regard to *The Black Book* superseded whatever cues he was receiving from above.

Mrs. Dawidowicz denigrates Ehrenburg's role in the book, preferring to assert, without reference to any documentary evidence or eyewitness testimony, that Vasily Grossman "was the driving force behind the project." Grossman was a great journalist; in the eyes of many people he was second only to Ehrenburg in prestige and fame inside the USSR at the height of the war. But only Ehrenburg possessed the freedom of movement, the reputation among the population, and the devotion of Soviet troops which made it possible for him to collect, on his own and through the mail, the accounts of Jewish suffering which make *The Black Book* so extraordinary a document. Mrs. Dawidowicz should be aware that

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there are still people in Moscow who helped compile *The Black Book* forty years ago, who saw how Ehrenburg and Grossman worked on it, and who remember how Ehrenburg devotedly saved the original albums under his own bed.

Finally, Mrs. Dawidowicz takes exception to my saying that the Soviet government "has been reluctant to acknowledge that the Jews were the primary victims of Nazi hatred." I agree with her that in the last decade Soviet propaganda has become so crude as to deny that Jews were the primary victims of Hitler. But the official attitude has not been consistent. In the past, the Kremlin tended to obscure the number of Jewish victims, emphasizing the suffering of the population as a whole. But should we forget Andrei Gromyko's statement at the United Nations during the debate on the partition of Palestine linking the need for a Jewish state to the suffering of the Jewish people? It is easy to forget now that Yevtushenko's poem, "Babi Yar," was published in an official Soviet newspaper. Even four years ago, when Soviet propaganda had already entered its most anti-Semitic phase, the novel *Heavy Sand* was officially published in Moscow. For all its literary shortcomings, Anatoly Rybakov's novel is an eloquent testament to Jewish suffering and heroism during World War II. Its publication makes it impossible to claim that the Soviet government, even today, puts forward nothing but lies about the Holocaust.

The Democrats

To the Editor of Commentary:

Penn Kemble's article, "A New Direction for the Democrats?" [October 1982], is so full of assumptions propounded as truths, so pervaded by misleading statements and faulty reasoning, that I was tempted to use the numerals applied to the sections of his article to refute his argument point by point. I will, however, devote my answer to a few major points for the sake of economy. . . .

Mr. Kemble opens his piece . . . with a comparison of the mid-term Democratic convention of 1982 with the conventions of the recent past. . . . Basically, he feels that the changes were more of style than of substance. But he points to the emergence of the labor unions as a force in the Democratic party, claiming somehow that the leftward tilt of the party in 1972 had lasting effects only now ending: "Organized labor and its allies were cast aside in the Democratic campaign of 1976 and from the Carter administration that finally emerged from it." Mr. Kemble pretends to be totally ignorant of the fact that particular candidates have different records on labor issues, and Carter's record was just not very good. Edward Kennedy and Henry Jackson (from the two ends of the party spectrum) would have gotten a much more enthusiastic response from labor than Carter did. . . .

In his discussion of foreign policy, Mr. Kemble quotes from the draft-policy statement produced by the Democratic National Committee. The passage selected by Mr. Kemble asserts that the foreign policy of the Carter administration was devoted to human rights, "placing the totalitarian regimes of the world on the defensive in the court of world opinion." Mr. Kemble counters that the "main effect of the Carter human-rights policy was not to put totalitarian regimes on the defensive—if the term is correctly used as a description of the Communist system." But surely, one cannot expect the Democratic party to adopt Jeane Kirkpatrick's spurious distinction between "*authoritarian*" and "*totalitarian*" regimes—no, the Democratic National Committee meant what it said and in terms that are easily understood in the context in which they were written. One cannot assume that the entire world speaks "neoconservative-speak."

Mr. Kemble criticizes the National Organization for Women (NOW) for its decision to punish the elements within the Democratic party who were hostile to the passage of the ERA. . . . The organizers of NOW are without question aware that they have many more friends in the Democratic party than in the GOP; but after the frustrating failure of the ERA, why should they be softer on the Democrats who opposed the ERA than on the Republicans? What

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is interesting about Mr. Kemble's discussion of NOW is the very fact that he strays from his subject—the Democratic party itself. This only serves to point out that his bile is directed at all those forces he identifies with the Democratic party over the last decade.

One of his greatest failures of judgment, however, is his attempt to portray the party's support of the state of Israel as somehow ironic, even hypocritical in face of its refusal to combat terrorism elsewhere, like El Salvador. But is it a contradiction to support a democratic state against terrorism and not be as sympathetic to authoritarian (did I use the right word?) states beleaguered by terrorism? I think the answer here is clear when it is seen that it is democracy that is at stake. And the large number of cold warriors who are unsympathetic to Israel—from John Connally to Caspar Weinberger—suggests that terrorism is not the only issue involved. There are, rather, values at stake; and for some Democrats, Israel has traditionally lived up to the values they themselves preach. . . .

After the 1980 election there was a good deal of talk that the Democrats must become much closer to the Republicans. . . . Well, the talk was nonsense; there must, for example, be a reason why Daniel P. Moynihan is moving closer and closer to the social "radicalism" of the last two decades of Democratic politics and gathering tremendous political momentum along the way. There must be a reason for the success of the nuclear-freeze referendums in all sorts of unlikely places.

Mr. Kemble unleashes his wit on the continual use of the word "balanced" in the resolutions voted on in Philadelphia. There may, however, be good reason for the Democrats to use the word "balanced" so often; for it is Reagan whose policies are the most radical and not the policies of the Great Society or the various Democratic conventions of the past lampooned by Mr. Kemble.

CARL LANDAUER
Yale University
New Haven, Connecticut

PENN KEMBLE writes:

Carl Landauer raises only two points which warrant a response.

Although Jeane Kirkpatrick did write insightfully on the difference between totalitarian and authoritarian regimes, she was by no means the first to draw that distinction—as she herself has frequently pointed out. That there is in fact a radical distinction between the Nazi and the Communist systems on the one hand and traditional autocracies or military governments on the other was first understood in the 1930's by scholars who usually came from the tradition of the democratic Left. No American political party which denies that distinction—which, for example, looks upon Guatemala as a danger equal to Castro's Cuba—is likely to win the Presidency. Nor does it deserve to—although to say this is in no way to countenance the faults of the Guatemalan regime.

The distinguishing feature of a totalitarian regime is its use of terror: not only against its political opponents, but against its own citizens in its attempt to regiment their everyday lives. The Lebanese—both Christian and Muslim—have recently provided testimony to the totalitarian character of the PLO.

It is not surprising that the PLO and its Soviet sponsors avidly present their cause as simply the struggle of an Arab nationalism against Zionist oppression. This helps them unite the Arab world in their support and discourages non-Jews from standing up for Israel. But it is remarkable that so many of Israel's supposed friends on the Left encourage this ploy by castigating those who make the connection between the PLO and other Soviet-sponsored totalitarian movements as fanatical cold warriors.

Israel does have an admirably democratic government. El Salvador's government, though far more defensible than is generally acknowledged, falls considerably short of the standards set by Israel. But the victory of the totalitarian Left in El Salvador will not be felt solely by El Salvador's present government—indeed, it will be felt by such people perhaps least of all. It will be felt most harshly by El Salvador's ordinary citizens, the people who braved guerrilla fire to vote in that country's recent election. Thus, contrary to what Mr. Landauer asserts, the true supporters of Israel will not strive to distinguish their cause from that of the defense of El Salvador. Such cowardice only serves to hearten a common enemy.

Lawyers

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

In his generally admiring review of *The Best Defense* by Alan M. Dershowitz [Books in Review, October 1982] Joseph W. Bishop, Jr. describes a case in which Dershowitz, through "a series of intricate procedural maneuvers," managed to prevent the prosecution of "terrorists who were fairly clearly responsible for the murder of an innocent girl."

At the conclusion of the review Mr. Bishop offers three justifications for "a lawyer's using every legal device he can think of to get off a man whom he knows to be guilty." First, he cites Samuel Johnson's argument that it is for the judge and jury, not the lawyer, to determine guilt or innocence. Of course, the preferred tactic of Dershowitz and other defense attorneys is to prevent judge and jury from having access to the evidence which is necessary for such a determination. Dr. Johnson lived at a time when defense attorneys did not have available the legal tools which Dershowitz so skillfully exploits. In 18th-century England the accused was not even permitted the assistance of counsel in presenting his case, and appeal was virtually nonexistent. I do not think that Dr. Johnson would have had any difficulty distinguishing between arguing the meaning of certain evidence before a jury and preventing a jury from making a fully informed judgment (or getting that judgment overturned on technical grounds).

Secondly, Mr. Bishop argues that the good advocate should first convince himself that his client is innocent. Of course, this could be rather difficult if the lawyer knows his client to be guilty. Mr. Bishop has just pointed out that determining guilt or innocence is not the lawyer's job. The ethical problem lies not in defending the guilty, but in making use of legal devices which prevent the criminal-justice system from functioning properly. How would Mr. Bishop regard the ethics of a prosecutor who, by preventing the introduction of relevant evidence, managed to convict a man he knew to be innocent?

Finally, Mr. Bishop contends that we can live with the unjust acquittal of criminals and the spectacle of a professor of law bragging of his success in frustrating justice because the alternative is "Communist justice," which he defines as a system in which the "guilty" are not entitled to a defense and the determination of guilt is made by the government. Does Mr. Bishop

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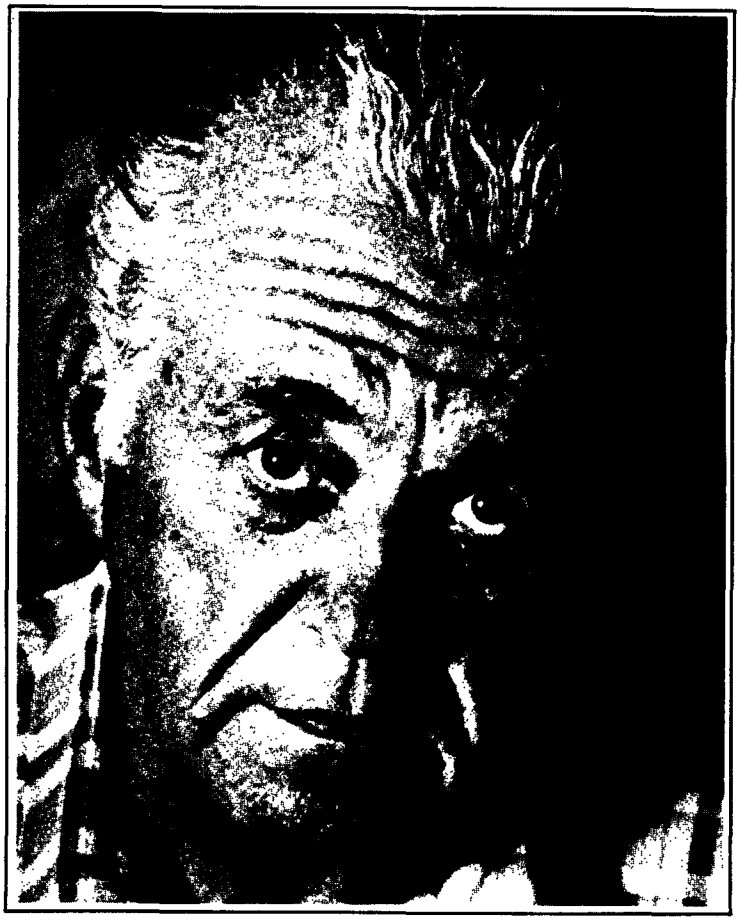

For Mac McConnell, these have not been the golden years. At age 66, he suffers from high blood pressure, has been unemployed since 1978 and is deprived of a pension earned by years of back-breaking work.

But that's only part of his ordeal that has included attacks on his home and car, eight slashed tires and fleeing for his life down a Colorado highway, pursued by three cars that nearly drove him off the road.

Mac paid the price. His crime was his family's need for his pension. His judge and jury were union bosses who condemned one brave man who refused to go along with their plans.

In 1977, Mac was a steelworker in Colorado's Gardner-Denver plant. When union bosses ordered a strike, Mac had to obey or risk stiff union fines and discipline.

But Mac was trapped when the company announced that anyone who didn't return to work would lose his job. Mac had only a year and a half to work before he could collect his pension, so he resigned from the union and returned to his job. A month later, the strike ended, the company rehired many strikers, and Mac's ordeal began.

Threatening phone calls and verbal abuse were only the beginning of a reign of terror that lasted almost a year. Mac and a handful of co-workers who wanted to save their jobs found their machinery vandalized. Windows in Mac's home were shot out, and a colleague found her car ashtray loaded with explosives.

By mid-1978, Mac was understandably a physical and emotional wreck. In desperation, he finally quit his job. He was later hired at another plant, but the harassment followed him. Within a few weeks he was forced to leave his job, just months short of receiving his pension. He was deprived of his health and life insurance and part of his Social Security benefits. He has been unemployed ever since.

But Mac didn't give up: "I feel it's time for people to stand up and be heard. As a veteran, I've done it once and I can do it again. I have a moral and religious obligation to fight for what I think is right, or to fight against what I think is wrong."

Mac wrote the National Right to Work Legal Defense Foundation. We accepted his case and are fighting for $650,000 in damages from the United Steelworkers for intentionally inflicting emotional distress and deliberately interfering with his employment.

We're helping Mac and everyone else we can. Currently, the National Right to Work Legal Defense Foundation is supporting 250 cases across the country, involving union violence, illegal union political spending, academic and political freedom, and other basic employee rights.

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believe that "Communist justice" is what prevails in the European countries (or, for that matter, prevailed in this country for most of its history)? I had not realized that the ability of a lawyer to prevent the punishment of murderers of innocent girls was so essential to a non-Communist system of justice. The legal tactics which Dershowitz uses are generally unavailable in other Western nations, and yet, strangely enough, at least one eminent scholar of comparative law has concluded that if he were innocent, he would prefer to be tried by one of the civil-law courts of Europe, but that if he were guilty, he would prefer to be tried by an American court.

I would suggest to Mr. Bishop that it is possible to view a criminal case not as a battle of wits between opposing attorneys but as a serious attempt to determine guilt or innocence, and we should judge the criminal-justice system by how accurately and well it performs that function. I would further suggest that Dershowitz's success in exonerating the guilty is compelling evidence, as if any more were needed, that our system is working very poorly indeed, and that reform is badly needed. One of the principal obstacles to such reform is the complacency of Mr. Bishop and his colleagues, who, in their ignorance of all other legal systems, seem to believe that any change in the status quo means "Communist justice."

JON JEWETT
Alexandra, Virginia

JOSEPH W. BISHOP, JR., writes:

Jon Jewett's letter is simply a shotgun blast of indignant language, aimed in the general direction of the American system of criminal justice and particularly at the provision of the Sixth Amendment to the Constitution of the United States that "In all criminal prosecutions, the accused shall enjoy the right . . . to have the Assistance of Counsel for his defense." It does not say "an innocent accused." I would be the last to contend that our system is perfect, or even the best. It is too often weighted in favor of the guilty. In particular, I wish the courts would do away with the exclusionary rule, which bars the admission of even the most cogent evidence if obtained in violation of the accused's constitutional rights. (I would continue to exclude coerced confessions, not primarily in order to deter violation of the accused's Fifth Amendment right not to be "compelled in any criminal case to be a witness against himself," but because such confessions are too likely to be untrue. It is for this reason that their admission is generally barred by the British Judges' Rules.)

The right to the assistance of counsel is another matter. Would Mr. Jewett repeal this clause of the Sixth Amendment? It is not, as he seems to think (I infer that he is not a lawyer), a peculiarity of American criminal justice. In England, in West Germany, and probably in every other constitutional democracy, an accused, guilty or innocent, has a similar right. But a right to counsel is meaningless unless counsel has a duty and privilege to do whatever law and ethics permit to defend his client. Does Mr. Jewett really prefer a system where the government first decides whether an accused is guilty, and if it decides that he is, denies him the assistance of counsel? If he were innocent of the crime charged, but guilty of dissident opinions, would he really prefer Communist justice to American?

Incidentally, Mr. Jewett seems to have read my review with no more care than he has read the Fifth and Sixth Amendments if, indeed, he has read them at all. I did not say that an advocate "*should* first convince himself that his client is innocent." I merely said that he *does* usually convince himself that his client, though guilty of some crime, is not guilty of the one with which he is charged, or at least is being treated unfairly, as by being singled out for prosecution when others, equally guilty, are not charged. I know this from many years of empirical observation. If Mr. Jewett knew anything about criminal law and lawyers (which I suspect he does not), he would know it too.

Liberals

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

. . . Contrary to what James Nuechterlein ["Liberalism & Theodore H. White," September 1982] and/or Theodore H. White maintain, liberalism in the 1980's . . . is alive and well; it is more articulate and sharply defined, though chastened, than it has been for years. What did happen, I grant, is that an excess of misplaced guilt, dating from the mid-60's, stampeded many adult liberals (who should have known better) into apologetic retreat as the New Left advanced; they are still sheepish captives, in the orbit of the Old Left and the pseudo-radicals who ironically have preempted the term "liberal." Secondly, Vietnam was misinterpreted as a failure-*cum*-disgrace in itself, and—worse still—a judgment on the cold-war commitment in general. That misjudgment split and thinned the liberal ranks; it did drive the less informed and tough-minded liberals away, but it did not disaffect or demoralize the real ones. Thirdly, the world's actual economic sufferings have shown the inadequacy of economic theory in general, and of many fine old liberal or New Deal economic policies in particular, so that suddenly the critiques of the "conservatives" appear pertinent to many genuine liberals. This is not because these liberals have turned conservative, but because their eyes are open and their minds are free. But none of these trends indicates a failure of liberalism.

Messrs. Nuechterlein and White might have seen this more clearly if they had not identified John Kennedy as a quintessential liberal. He never was. He represented neither liberalism's compassionate Hubert Humphrey humanitarianism nor its gallant Adlai Stevenson anti-McCarthyism. He proved ultimately to be one of America's greatest Presidents; but a judgment on him is no judgment on American liberalism at all.

PAUL B. JOHNSON
Chicago, Illinois

JAMES NUECHTERLEIN writes:

Paul B. Johnson is free to define liberalism as he pleases. Perhaps he and his friends are, in some Platonic sense, the "real" liberals, though I am not sure from his description who or what would be included under that label. In any case, Mr. Johnson should understand that those who under the terms of his letter would be excluded from the ranks of "genuine" liberals constitute a majority of those who currently go by that name. His quarrel, I think, is less with me than with what those who call themselves liberals have been doing for the past fifteen years.

Evolution & Creationism

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

I would like to comment on Jeffrey Marsh's article on creationism versus evolutionism, "Evolution

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and Its Discontents" [November 1982]. . . .

I think creationists have a legitimate point of view, but it should not be taught in natural-science classes; rather, it belongs in history, literature, religion, and philosophy-of-science classes, since creationists use scientific data only to buttress their philosophical and theological propositions that God is objectively real and that He created man and the world in which we live.

Creationists are admirable and well-intentioned; they seek to demonstrate that there is order, meaning, and purpose in the universe, and that there is something sacred about man and the world in which we live. The difficulty with creationism is that science, because of its own limitations and restrictions, simply cannot deal with the questions of God and creation. When natural scientists either affirm or negate the objective reality of God and creation, they step outside their field of expertise and enter different though no less intellectually respectable and legitimate branches of knowledge, namely, theology and the philosophy of science.

Scientists as scientists are concerned solely with descriptive reality; they deal with observable and empirically verifiable phenomena; they use the techniques of the laboratory to seek truth and knowledge of external reality. We simply cannot and must not provide theological or philosophical answers to scientific questions, even as we cannot and must not supply scientific answers to theological and philosophical questions.

Perhaps our public schools will incorporate into their natural-science classes an intense study and discussion of the philosophy of science so that creationism may be legitimately examined.

HAVEN BRADFORD GOW
Arlington Heights, Illinois

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

My only complaint about Jeffrey Marsh's excellent article is that he does not explore what I call the "political" aspects of the subject. In my view, one cannot address the problem of science (evolutionism) and religion (creationism) and the effects these beliefs have on the believers, without also discussing the "deterministic" aspects of certain types of *scientism* and the ideologies (e.g., Marxism-Leninism) which imitate these scientisms. The late Nobel Prize-winning biochemist, Jacques Monod, . . . deplored the invasion of true science by charlatans of "Diamat" (dialectical materialism). Unfortunately, as Monod demonstrated in his book, *Chance and Necessity*, "Diamat" and the many watered-down glosses of it exert an undue influence over modern society and on evolutionism in particular. . . .

Both the extremes—militant materialism of the Marxist-Leninist type (often encountered in certain species of neo-Darwinism, current textbooks, etc.) and rigid creationist fundamentalism—are detrimental to science. As Monod writes, "Diamat" in particular proclaims "that it has 'scientifically' established the laws of history [and of evolution], which man has no choice or duty but to obey if he does not wish to sink away into nothingness." Such "eternal laws of the cosmos" . . . make biological and human history a mere unfolding of a preordained order. Out of such projections of myths, freedom —of science and of individuals—is likely to be destroyed.

ALBERT L. WEEKS
New York City

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

In "Evolution and Its Discontents" Jeffrey Marsh states that the scientific method ". . . can say nothing about its [the universe's] ultimate purpose or man's proper role in it." He then implies that non-scientific means can provide answers to these questions.

Inherent in this statement is the concept that revelation or other metaphysical phenomena outside the domain of science can somehow enable man to obtain the answers. This requires the existence of a mind in man that is separate from the brain, because the brain can only sense and deal with electrochemical stimuli that are subject to the scientific method, which Mr. Marsh says cannot contribute to the answers. This traditional dualist concept of separate mind and brain is rejected by many scientists including Nobel Laureate Roger Sperry. His recent book, *Science and Moral Priority*, argues that mind-brain is an integrated entity, subject to legitimate scientific investigation. It follows that any answers that man provides to questions about the purpose of the universe and man's role in it are developed in and articulated by the mind-brain, a complex that deals with electrochemical phenomena. Because the phenomena that lead the mind-brain to the answers are legitimate concerns of science, the substance of the answers themselves is a legitimate subject for the scientific method, a premise that Mr. Marsh rejects out of hand. He should at least acknowledge the possibility of the scientific method contributing to the answers.

SYLVAN GOLLIN
Claremont, California

JEFFREY MARSH writes:

I agree with Haven Bradford Gow that science and theology deal with different questions. However, the conflict between creationists and evolutionists does not arise only because of a mutual lack of understanding that the same words (What is man?) can be understood to ask very different questions. Even when this philosophical point is understood, there remains a fundamental conflict over the substantive answers. It seems unlikely that "intense . . . study of the philosophy of science" can lead to a cease-fire in what is more a *Kulturkampf* than an abstract debate.

I do not follow Sylvan Gollin's argument. Even if one accepts his highly debatable point that the mind cannot be separated from the brain, a knowledge of the electrochemical processes by which thought takes place tells us nothing about the source, meaning, or truth of the information processed, any more than a knowledge of the workings of a television set enables us to make critical comparisons among Lucille Ball, Carl Sagan, and the Reverend Jerry Falwell.

I thank Albert L. Weeks for reminding us that the freedom of evolutionary thought is threatened at least as much by extreme materialism as by religious fundamentalism.

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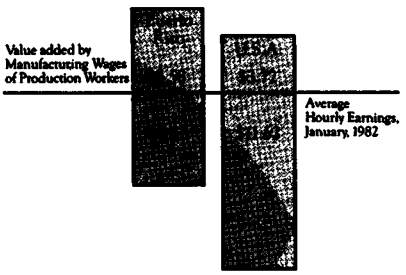

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*Sources: U.S. Bureau of the Census and U.S. and Puerto Rico Departments of Labor

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The Republican Future

James Nuechterlein

WHAT happened in last November's congressional elections is what did not happen. An apt summary of the election results might read: no realignment, no repudiation.

The Republicans had dreamed that 1982 might be a replay in reverse of 1934, the year in which, following Franklin Roosevelt's defeat of Herbert Hoover in 1932, the Democratic party consolidated its position as the nation's new majority party. But as it turned out, the great Republican victory of 1980 had no second act. On the other hand, neither did the voters deal the Reagan administration the massive rebuke the Democrats had looked for and that a 10.1 percent (and rising) unemployment rate gave them plausible reason to expect. Given the nation's critical economic condition, the Republicans have cause to be grateful that they were able to contain their losses as well as they did.

But if the GOP averted a disaster, that is all it did. The Republicans lost the election. The Democrats' pickup of 26 seats in the House of Representatives was at the high end of the 15 to 25 seat improvement most observers had predicted for them, and while the Republicans did not lose any seats in the Senate, they did not make the gains that might have been expected in view of the fact that more Democrats than Republicans faced reelection. The message of the election was an ambiguous one, but the Democrats had more reason to read it with pleasure than did the Republicans. The fundamental fact remains: the Democratic party is still the majority party in America.

Yet while the Democrats won, they did not win decisively. The American people rebuked the Republicans, but they did so in a gentle fashion. Indeed, one might best say of the election that it added up to a postponed verdict on the Reagan administration. The voters' interim judgment on the course the President wants to stay indicates that their patience is wearing thin but is not yet fully exhausted. The results of the election point to no clear policy mandate, and they suggest that the public will not be ready to issue a definitive judgment on Ronald Reagan and his conservative agenda before 1984—if then. The President and his party have been mildly chastised, but they still have time to persuade the American people that the tentative mandate handed them in 1980 ought to be confirmed and extended.

If the political future is as open-ended as this analysis of the 1982 elections suggests, then the two years of political maneuvering we face before the 1984 elections should be of more than ordinary interest. After all, Reagan is no ordinary President. He is our most ideological chief executive since Franklin Roosevelt, and he intends as consequential a revision of our political economy as did FDR. Therefore Reagan's fate, and that of the party he leads, holds significance beyond that which attaches to the success or failure of any President. Jimmy Carter's coming and going caused barely a blip on the track of our political history. When he won, and when he lost, it made no real difference because he had no distinctive vision of where America was or ought to be going. His was a faceless and anonymous Presidency. Reagan's is neither of those things, and his political fate will resonate through our political culture with an urgency that no American will be able to disregard.

Two books published within the past year—one written by Burton Yale Pines,* the other by Kevin P. Phillips†—offer overlapping but contrasting visions of what is likely to occur over the near political future, and if neither of them presents an entirely persuasive case, they are both provocative in themselves as well as useful in providing avenues into analysis of our political prospects.

II

BURTON PINES's *Back to Basics* is not, strictly speaking, involved with either Ronald Reagan or the Republican party. Although he concedes that the Reagan administration has "focused and harnessed politically" the traditionalist movement he describes, Pines argues that the movement is mainly "nonpolitical." Indeed, Pines suggests at the end of his book that if Reagan fails to commit himself fully to the traditionalist agen-

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* *Back to Basics: The Traditionalist Movement That is Sweeping Grass-Roots America*, Morrow, 348 pp., $13.50.

† *Post-Conservative America: People, Politics, and Ideology in a Time of Crisis*, Random House, 261 pp., $14.50.

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da, the Democrats could capture that movement and "return to power for another long reign." But it is difficult to take that argument seriously, or to suppose that Pines does so himself. The fate of the traditionalist movement and the fate of the Republican party cannot be separated, as Pines's own analysis makes entirely clear. If the Democrats regain full political ascendancy, it will be because they have stifled the traditionalist movement, not taken it over.

Pines inadvertently makes the point himself when, just after asserting traditionalism's nonpolitical nature, he confesses that it leaves "little room for liberalism." But everyone, Pines surely included, knows that the Democratic party is America's liberal party, and it makes no more sense to imagine the Democrats converting to conservative traditionalism than it does to conjure up a GOP suddenly enamored of Galbraithian economics or McGovernite politics. The partisan logic of Pines's traditionalism cannot be avoided: traditionalism's fortunes will rise and fall in rhythm with the fortunes of the Republican party. (Traditionalism could in theory find expression in third-party politics, but for reasons to be developed later, that seems highly unlikely.)

But what does Pines mean by traditionalism? He means, simply speaking, a revolt against dominant modernist liberal values in virtually every area of public and private life: economics, politics, education, family relations, religion, crime and punishment, and the intellectual world. He means defense of private enterprise; advocacy of growth over redistribution; support of the work ethic; suspicion of Keynesian emphasis on aggregate demand; enthusiasm for high academic standards; preservation of the nuclear family as a cultural norm (which implies, among other things, antifeminism and repudiation of gay rights); defense of religious orthodoxy and opposition to secular humanism as philosophy and the social gospel as theology; emphasis in criminal justice on just punishment rather than rehabilitation; respect for structures of authority, discipline, and moral order (and accompanying scorn for privatist moral anarchy); belief in a firm foreign policy and a strong national defense, both rooted in patriotic affirmation of American purposes; recognition that a free society values equal opportunity over equal outcomes; rejection of utopian views of human nature and an overriding skepticism and fear of government plans to build, by rationalist enterprise, the good society.

This traditionalist movement (Pines prefers *traditionalist* to either *rightist*, which he thinks too political, or *conservative*, which he thinks too ideological) is reactionary in a literal sense. It is, in Pines's view, a genuine grass-roots reaction against the excesses of post-60's liberalism. The people behind the various discrete strands of the movement have been "pushed . . . to the brink" by a liberalism that has been "careening out of control" for the past fifteen years. These people may not yet constitute a national majority, Pines concludes, but their counterrevolution has already succeeded to the point that America's postwar liberal dynasty has lost the "Mandate of Heaven." The question for the immediate future is whether traditionalist forces will be able successfully to appropriate that mandate or whether we will continue in our present condition: one in which the mandate remains unclaimed and our politics wanders back and forth in uncertain ideological crosscurrents.

Pines understands that the forces of liberalism, though recently on the defensive, still command considerable resources. Liberals lie wounded, but they are far from slain. Aside from the inertial force created by a generation of instinctive looking to Washington for solutions to all imaginable problems, liberalism can expect automatic support from government workers and others dependent on government programs for their livelihood; from intellectuals, for most of whom liberalism remains not so much an ideology as an assumption (part of the world taken for granted); from certain sectors of organized labor, especially the leadership; from mainstream church groups, for whom left-wing politics has become the approved expression of religious piety; and from the national media and other demi-intellectual elements of the New Class, for whom liberalism remains synonymous with intellectual and moral respectability.

YET for all the forces arrayed against traditionalism, Pines is on balance optimistic about its prospects. And the reasons he points to for his guarded optimism undercut his argument that the traditionalist resurgence is essentially nonpolitical. *Back to Basics* begins, appropriately enough, with Ronald Reagan's inauguration and with Pines wondering whether January 1981 marked simply the installation of a new President or the inauguration of a new era. Will this turn out to have been, he asks, a 1952, in which Dwight Eisenhower's election brought the Republicans out of the political wilderness but left the nation's course essentially unchanged, or a 1932, in which Franklin Roosevelt's victory not only restored the Democrats to power after a long absence but also marked the beginning of a political revolution? Pines clearly leans toward the latter interpretation, and his reason for so doing is the "happy confluence . . . of a right man in a right place at a right time." In other words, Reagan shows, from Pines's perspective, a hopeful promise of riding the traditionalist (read conservative) resurgence to a national socio-political revival. The traditionalist movement may not have begun in politics, but it has become a highly political, and largely partisan, phenomenon.

If there is anything that clouds Pines's hope for the future, it is the gap he sees between the two major sectors of the traditionalist movement. On the one side stand conservative and neoconservative intellectuals, corporate executives, and main-

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line Republicans; on the other, the phalanx of ordinary citizens—social conservatives all—concerned over the moral future of the nation. The first group mainly worries about issues of economic policy, foreign affairs, and defense; the second, often—and too loosely—identified as the New Right, is characteristically preoccupied with such matters as education, family policy, abortion, and school prayer. In Pines's view, these two groups seldom communicate, and when they do they are as likely as not to be at cross purposes. The two groups need each other, he suggests, and they ought to recognize that at bottom their causes are one. Above all they are—or should be—united in their common antipathy to liberal orthodoxy. Those elements of style that separate the two camps should be transcended for the sake of the higher traditionalist good.

Here Pines has raised a major issue, but as is too often true in this book, he does not give it fully adequate treatment. *Back to Basics*, encyclopedic in coverage, anecdotal in style, middlebrow in analysis, reads like an extended *Time* cover story (Pines was formerly a *Time* editor) and tends to uncritical evaluations and premature resolutions. It is just where the problems get interesting and difficult that *Back to Basics* leaves off. Pines is so eager to see his movement prosper that he is occasionally led to overlook or misconceive the divisions within it. For the gap between the two sectors of traditionalism may exist in somewhat different form, and be more difficult to bridge, than Pines indicates.

Pines himself senses this when, after laying out the differing policy emphases of the two groups, he concludes that those differences are not irreconcilable. In this, he is surely right. The preoccupation of his first group with issues of economics, foreign policy, and defense does not mean that the people in it are indifferent to social issues or that they hold markedly different views on such matters from those traditionalists for whom social issues are of primary importance. And the argument holds in reverse as well. The two groups have differing priorities but not incompatible sympathies.

WHAT, then, remains to divide traditionalist forces? Style, Pines says. His first group "simply is uncomfortable with the direct, insistent, and studiedly unsophisticated manner of the social-issues crowd." But this matter of style cuts deeper, and in different ways, than Pines suggests.

Indeed, Pines undermines his own cause when he identifies concern over social issues with the political style of the New Right. For a great many people—and not just those on the far Left—the New Right connotes fanaticism, intolerance, and mean-spiritedness, and those negative perceptions of political style have, in many cases, been extended to the substantive issues with which the New Right is associated. It is one of the great virtues of Pines's book that it demonstrates that most of traditionalism's causes are reasonable causes and most of the people behind those causes reasonable people. One need not be a crazy or a sectarian zealot to be unhappy with prevailing trends in our society: in the arts, family life, religion, or public morality. It does not require a true believer's mentality to conclude that moral decay is far advanced in our common social life; it requires only a normally developed awareness of the way things are. Those who find left-wing values out of step with reality and subversive of social order are not necessarily inadequate people driven by the pressures of modernity to irrational protest; in most cases, they are simply people of common sense who have decided that not all change is progress and not all attachment to traditional values comes from obscurantist nostalgia.

Yet there *are* crazies, zealots, and fanatics on the Right, and there is no greater obstacle to the progress of a responsible conservatism than the perception, carefully cultivated by the Norman Lears of this world, that the Right is inhabited only by inadequate and unhinged personalities. Pines knows that this is not true, and he devotes much of his book to demonstrating it, but he subtly undercuts the case he is building by failing to make some necessary distinctions. He appears to be guided by the conservative equivalent of the popular-front mentality: for him there are no enemies on the Right. But even as liberals and social democrats within the popular front damaged their own credibility by failing to dissociate themselves from the Stalinists in their midst, so will conservatives wreck their own cause if they do not distinguish themselves from the know-nothing fringe.

Thus the question of "style" that divides conservatives goes beyond matters of proper political manners or relative degrees of intellectual sophistication, and it does not coincide with concern for one set of issues rather than another. It has to do at bottom with whether or not one approaches politics as an arena for conducting holy wars and arriving at final resolutions. And the way one sees the political world determines to a considerable extent the way one conducts oneself within it. Those for whom politics is not ultimate—and that surely has traditionally been one of the distinguishing marks of a conservative—should be wary of associating too closely with those who, in the political equivalent of war, will not take prisoners.

One of the benefits for conservatives in last November's elections was the apparent failure of right-wing dogmatists to achieve their objectives. One wonders what Left-liberal fundraisers will do to raise money now that the New Right's losses have deprived them of their endlessly-repeated appeal that the fascists are almost upon us. NCPAC and the Moral Majority may have raised large funds for the Right, but they have probably done even better for the Left. This is not to say that everyone connected with the New Right is a

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dangerous fanatic or that the hysterical charges of the Left concerning, say, the Moral Majority should be taken at face value. But conservatives who rightly attack liberals for allowing themselves to be compromised by the New Left should make as clear as possible those things that distinguish them, in style and substance, from the New Right. Pines would have written a better book if he had helped his readers to understand that a conservative is not at all the same thing as a radical of the Right.

Perhaps because he underestimates the divisions within his traditionalist movement, Pines appears to overestimate—or at least assume too easily—its strength. For him it is clearly the wave of the future (if a conservative movement can ever appropriately be called that). That may be, but it is by no means a sure thing. For those conservatives tempted to excessive optimism, a reading of Kevin Phillips's *Post-Conservative America* should provide a sobering antidote.

III

IT WOULD be difficult to imagine a more perverse book of political analysis than *Post-Conservative America*. Kevin Phillips is a conservative political analyst (and lifelong Republican) who first attracted widespread attention with his late-60's prediction concerning *The Emerging Republican Majority*. There he announced the breakup of the New Deal Democratic coalition and the emergence of the Republican party as the nation's new majority political vehicle. Watergate disrupted the second half of that prediction, of course, but just as it appeared close to fulfillment with Ronald Reagan's victory in 1980, Phillips began to develop second thoughts.

In this new book, written as the Reagan administration was settling into office in the spring and summer of 1981, Phillips indicated doubts as to the durability of Reagan's conservative coalition. By the time a long preview of the book appeared in the May 13, 1982 issue of the *New York Review of Books*, Phillips was ready to announce that Reagan had failed and that the task of political analysis was now to "focus upon the ramifications and dimensions of that failure"—which he then proceeded to do in such a way as to gladden the hearts of the Left and bring dismay to any responsible conservative. After reading the book and the essay—especially the latter, which is more focused, stark, and foreboding—with their presentiments of radical reactionary upsurges and the emergence of "a species of European corporate statism," the reader can only conclude that if this is conservatism and if it does have any prospects in America, it must be the duty of a decent citizen to do all in his power to crush it.

Phillips would presumably respond to the charge of perversity that it is the job of the political analyst to call events as he sees them, without regard either to his own ideological preferences or to which elements on the political spectrum his analysis provides aid and comfort. Yet the question recurs: what would lead a conservative Republican to write such a relentlessly negative and pessimistic account of a conservative Republican administration barely a few months after it had taken office, and what would make him present conservatism in general as such a reactionary and frightening force? (If Pines denies the presence of extremists on the Right, Phillips often seems to see no one else there at all.) The case would be different if Reagan had suffered a series of early disasters rather than enjoying the string of legislative victories he quickly put together, or if there were credible evidence, as there is not, of the itch for right-wing authoritarianism that Phillips sees looming in our near future. The suspicion arises that Phillips had made up his mind in advance of the evidence. (More on this below.) But no matter: whether he be temperamentally contrary, astutely prescient, or simply wrongheaded, Phillips has written what he has written, and his argument, whatever one may think of it, is worth close attention.

For Phillips, Reagan's basic problem is that he has charge of a coalition that will not coalesce. One part of the coalition includes the traditional American conservatives—businessmen and ordinary rural, small-town, and suburban Republicans (this latter group virtually disappears from sight in the rest of the book). The other element in the coalition brings together the various components of the social, cultural, and religious Right—the so-called New Right—and this group, as Phillips describes it, is driven less by conservatism, as that term is normally understood, than by a cranky populism. This populist, anti-establishment Right is not Republican by habit (much of its political tradition is in FDR's New Deal) and it is unlikely to find an enduring home in the GOP. Thus there is little prospect, Phillips concludes, that Reagan and the Republicans can put together a stable majority coalition.

Reagan compounded his problems, Phillips suggests, by misreading the nature of his mandate. Rather than attending to the concerns of the New Right groups that provided the essential swing vote in his victory, he focused on economic problems and did so in a way certain to antagonize his social-issue constituency. Reagan's program of budget cuts, monetarist restraint, and reduction in marginal tax rates, widely regarded as unduly partial to the business community and to the rich (Phillips refers to the program as a kind of Coolidge nostalgia), held little attraction for the populist Right. That group was more interested in reductions in property taxes—the Proposition-13 phenomenon—than in progressive income-tax rates, and its anti-business instincts (the authentic populist touch) made it suspicious of monetarism and unsympathetic to Laffer curves and investment incentives.

Moreover, the populist Right's generalized ani-

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mus against big government did not preclude its expectation that the federal pork barrel would remain accessible to itself. While Reagan's lower-middle-class supporters wanted cuts in welfare, Phillips argues, they were not prepared for the widespread reductions in social programs that the administration's policies called for. So it was that the President's supply-side package came to be identified by many of the people who had voted for him as an elaborate giveaway to the rich, part of the traditional Republican bias toward the upper classes that had for so long insured the party's minority status.

None of this would be fatal, Phillips suggests, if the program worked; if, that is, whatever its class and group biases, it provided overall economic growth. But that is not happening, and Phillips seems to think it cannot. He sees monetarist and supply-side policies as incompatible, and he suggests that the administration's economic program has been in general too ambitious: Reagan's new economics, he says, has gone "beyond conservatism to adventurism."

The failure of supply-side prescriptions will lead, Phillips thinks, to renewed pressures for large-scale government intervention in the economy. What we are likely to see, he suggests, is some form of central planning under joint business-government auspices. This will be less liberal than corporatist, an adoption of what Phillips refers to as the John Connally option. The policy focus will be on reindustrialization and on economic growth and security, something along the lines of the first New Deal.

Such an "Economic Security State," Phillips suggests, offers the best opportunity for big-business conservatives to strike a deal with the populist Right. New Right forces, with their primary focus on anti-elitist cultural and social issues, can live with any set of economic arrangements that provides stability and security. With no deep commitments to Adam Smith and the free market, and with their faith in customary economic models having been eroded by the stagflation of the 70's, they could be quite amenable, Phillips concludes, to that "species of European corporate statism" he glimpses on the American horizon.

AT THIS point things start to seem ominous to readers, and they only get worse as Phillips develops his portrait of the "Center extremism" and "Middle American radicalism" that characterize the volatile and angry elements of American social conservatism. The tone of Phillips's analysis is suggested by the David Levine cartoon that accompanied his *New York Review* essay, which pictured Jesse Helms decked out in the regalia of the Ku Klux Klan, his robes splashily decorated with stars and stripes. Phillips cannot be held responsible for the cartoon, of course, but it in no way does violence to the spirit of what he wrote.

In the introduction to that article, Phillips raised the question whether, in the wake of Reagan's political failure, Middle American conservatism, "a conservatism that in my view already possesses a strong radical component, [will] not metamorphose into a radicalism of an extreme sort." Neither in the article nor in the book does Phillips ever give an unequivocal answer to that question, but he certainly gives his readers every reason to answer in the affirmative for themselves. (Phillips is a very careful writer. He paints endless possible scenarios without ever committing himself firmly to any of them. His book is filled with warnings and semi-predictions of the most awful sort, but he always appends the thought that it might not be so—though then again, he characteristically adds, it might well be. By the end of the book, Phillips has spun out so many possible futures that there is virtually no conceivable development that might arise over the next few years about which he could not point to some passage in his book and say, "I told you so." Yet it does not require a perspicacious reader to get the drift of what Phillips thinks is really in store for us.)

The volatility and radicalism of the social conservatives stem, according to Phillips, from a "two-decade breakdown" in our society so deep that American public life today exists "along a socio-economic San Andreas fault." There was one point a decade ago at which things almost got put back together in a fashion likely to restore social order and harmony. But, Phillips says, just as Richard Nixon was about to crush George McGovern and in so doing raise his party up to majority status, Watergate occurred, and even though Nixon still won the election easily, the cloud of the scandal prevented him from carrying Republican congressional majorities with him and effecting the conversion of enough Southern Democrats to the GOP to guarantee a long-term Republican majority.

Following that "stillborn realignment," American society continued the process of unravelling begun in the 60's with racial conflict and Vietnam and dragging on through the 70's in the series of crises and divisions that are by now a familiar litany: oil shortages, inflation, loss of economic dynamism, international humiliation, decline of faith in institutions, political, religious, and cultural splintering. It all adds up, Phillips argues, to the Balkanization of America, and in that Balkanization, the creation of durable governing coalitions becomes next to impossible. The liberals remain discredited from their misadventures in the 60's, but the various forces on the Right that together might constitute a political majority cannot effectively be welded together. The two-party system, Phillips thinks, may be damaged beyond repair; he talks of a long-term process of political "dealignment." More generally, he foresees an indefinite period of turmoil and convulsion as America, its days of greatness perhaps behind it, experiences the agonies of imperial retreat and decline.

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IT IS in the midst of such conditions, Phillips suggests, that the politics of Center extremism is apt to flourish. It has all happened before, of course, and for those whose historical memories need prodding, Phillips provides helpful references to "the politics of cultural despair" as well as a series of analogies with European authoritarian and fascist uprisings and an entire chapter comparing America with Weimar Germany. (Phillips has a blithely grand and fanciful way with historical references: my favorite is his portrait of Nixon's overthrow as a form of "republican regicide" and his subsequent comparison of that experience with regicides in England, France, Russia, Germany, and Spain. In each of these European cases, he warns us ominously, the final result was the emergence of an authoritarian regime.)

Phillips leaves no doubt that It Can Happen Here. The chapter on Weimar lays out the parallels: inflation, skepticism toward political institutions, cultural polarization, and nationalist frustration in the wake of the nation's first defeat in war. The end of the chapter produces Phillips's usual process of simultaneous denial and affirmation; at the finish, the conscientious reader can only conclude that America is very much like Weimar and nothing like it at all. Phillips does say clearly that we won't produce a Hitler (which is a comfort), but a passage elsewhere concedes that we could, under certain conditions, accommodate "a peculiarly American authoritarianism—apple-pie authoritarianism, one might say." Most of the elements that produced revolutionary conservatism in Europe are already present, in Phillips's eyes, in America: nationalist pride (and frustration), ethnic and racial hostilities, anti-secularism (intensified here by religious fundamentalism), demands for return to an "old morality," hostility to big business, suspicion of the existing party system.

Yet when one moves beyond the realm of Phillips's fertile historical imagination and begins to look for hard evidence of the existence in America of the sort of revolutionary conservatism he has in mind, doubts begin to creep in. Indeed, Phillips's own efforts to provide such evidence illustrate the tenuous nature of the relationship between his conjectures and American reality. Consider the concluding paragraphs of his chapter on "Middle American Radicalism."

> . . . we should note that American far-rightists, plumbing troubled depths, chalked up extraordinary and unprecedented percentages in a number of [recent] elections: Harold Covington, leader of the U.S. Nazi party, got over 40 percent of the vote in the May 1980 Republican primary for attorney general of North Carolina; Thomas Metzger, leader of the state Ku Klux Klan, won the Democratic nomination for Congress in the June primary in the suburban 43rd Congressional District of California; and former Nazi party member Gerald Carlson, who quit to found the National Christian Democratic Union, won the Republican primary in the suburban 15th District of Michigan, and then scored heavily in the general election as well. In both California and Michigan, party officials were afraid that the radical votes were cast deliberately, and that the more publicity Metzger and Carlson got, the more support they would get.
>
> So to my mind, some of the elements necessary for American Center extremism were in place in the early 1980's. Besides the increase in the activities of the (still negligible) American Nazis, a clear growth was apparent in the size of the Ku Klux Klan from 1978 to 1981—its membership doubled, and Klans became active on the high school and college levels. Analyses prepared by the Congressional Research Service showed a parallel escalation of violence directed against minorities. Sales of patriotic insignia soared. In California, state Attorney General George Deukmejian described the growth of paramilitary groups as "phenomenal," and said that "California has become a haven for paramilitary groups and cults, most of which view themselves as separate societies above the laws of the state." And in November 1980, as the country elected Ronald Reagan President, the Washington *Post* profiled "the latest and unlikeliest folk hero on American college campuses"—convicted Watergate burglar and Teutonophile G. Gordon Liddy, whose political autobiography, *Will*, draws heavily on fascist themes: patriotism, leadership, loyalty, will, force. Extolling these, Liddy drew standing ovations on campus after campus. In the meantime, American mass culture, epitomized by Hollywood and the movies, was turning to a kindred emphasis on force, will, power, irrationality, and mythology in a series of sword-and-sorcery movies, beginning with *Star Wars* in 1977 and then going on to *Excalibur, Clash of the Titans, Raiders of the Lost Ark,* and *Conan the Barbarian.*

Read any way one cares to, this accumulation of political and cultural trivia adds up to nothing at all. (G. Gordon Liddy and *Star Wars*?) So also with Phillips's entire thesis that the quasi-fascists (American style) lurk just beyond the gates.

IV

IT IS only fair to point out that when Phillips is not reaching beyond the evidence and historical plausibility, he has a number of intelligent, perceptive, and provocative things to say about American politics; had it been less ambitious, this would have been a better book. But at it is, it is curiously out of rhythm with political developments. For Phillips has jammed a 70's thesis into an 80's book.

There were moments during the 60's and 70's when America did seem to be coming apart, sometimes in violent convulsions, sometimes in a process of gradual disintegration (accompanied by fits of absence of mind on the part of the nation's leaders). During those times, Phillips's thesis of a Balkanized America and of a politics reflecting

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that condition made sense. But the election of 1980 changed things. Reagan's victory and his party's major gains in Congress may not have transformed American politics, but they did make a difference, and Phillips's persistent and often tortured attempts to discount the significance of the Republican victory only diminish the argument of his book. What was true of Jimmy Carter's America was not necessarily true of Ronald Reagan's America.

Phillips came up with his Balkanization theme in the late 70's, and one gets the impression that when he set out to write this book, he made the error of forcing the 1980 election results into the framework of his thesis rather than taking the election into account and modifying the thesis accordingly. It is difficult otherwise to account for the premature—even presumptuous—attempt to pronounce the failure of the Reagan experiment almost before it had begun. The Reagan administration may wind up in ultimate frustration, but Phillips's Chicken-Little analysis simply comes too early in the game for us to believe it is anything but predetermined.

PHILLIPS's argument is constructed too narrowly out of impersonal historical forces and tendencies. He seems to forget that individuals are as much the makers of their history as they are its products. Ronald Reagan is, for better or worse, the most significant presence in American politics since Franklin Roosevelt (Richard Nixon possibly excepted), and if he succeeds in what he has set out to do, he will leave an imprint on his times comparable to the one FDR left on his. (Can one imagine a satisfactory analysis of the New Deal years that would not give prominent place to Roosevelt?) Even if Reagan fails, he will be remembered in a way that Gerald Ford and Jimmy Carter will never be.

It is sometimes argued that Reagan lacks sufficient intellectual depth to have the impact that is here being suggested. But the best evidence on the point indicates that the President's intellect is more lazy than deficient, and in any case, intellectual depth has never been a requirement of significance in political life. Character and personality carry far more weight, as they ought to. Reagan is certainly no deep thinker, but neither, again, was Roosevelt. It is easy to forget how frequent (and accurate) were the charges that FDR was intellectually frivolous and shallow. But in political terms, the relevant assessment of Roosevelt—and it could apply as well to Reagan—was the famous one offered by Oliver Wendell Holmes: "A second-class intellect, but a first-class temperament."

Reagan has already brought a good deal more coherence into American politics than it has experienced in recent years. He has, first of all, united the conservative movement and turned the Republican party into a vehicle of that movement. Much of Phillips's analysis assumes the impossibility of effective political coalitions under current conditions. But one simply does not see the widespread signs of political fragmentation which that argument would suggest. Despite the claims that the business/mainline Republican and social-issue wings of conservatism cannot be held together, Reagan continues to command widespread loyalty and support in both camps, and more than once in the past, loyalty to a strong leader has been enough to keep warring factions in line. Besides, as already indicated, the distance between the two groups can easily be exaggerated: for the most part, economic conservatives and social conservatives have sympathy for each others' concerns. As is also true of liberalism, conservatism is more of a piece than is often understood.

Phillips and Pines both indicate, in different ways, that the New Right social conservatives are not wedded to Reagan and the Republican party, and that they could go their own political way if either pays insufficient attention to their interests. But where can they go? They will never find a welcome among the Democrats (the moral guardians of the New Politics within the party would never allow it) and third-party adventures would take them nowhere. It is difficult to imagine circumstances under which a Jesse Helms would undertake an independent race against Reagan, and even if he did, it would almost certainly be a hopeless effort. Reagan is no more vulnerable to political assaults from the Right than FDR was from the Left, and a conservative third-party challenge to Reagan could expect the same measure of success as that achieved by the Union party against Roosevelt in 1936. As for the 20- to 30-percent chance that Phillips gives the New Right of taking over the Republican party in 1984, those odds look extraordinarily generous, at least if Reagan chooses to run again.

Even as Reagan has effectively united conservatives within the Republican party, he has also inadvertently brought together liberals and Democrats. Democrats are going out of their way to say nice things about each other, and that stems not only from their freedom from the responsibilities of power, but also from Reagan's ability to concentrate their minds. By providing a distinct ideological focus to national politics, Reagan has acted to clarify political choices and provide politicians and voters with relatively unambiguous alternatives. That is high-risk politics, and it could be highly divisive if the electorate splits evenly, but it follows naturally from the circumstance of having a leader who seeks significant change from the customary ways of doing things. The Democrats may at present have no alternative program on which they can agree among themselves, but they are at least united in their opposition to the President's ideology.

OVERALL, there seems to be more ideological unity within each of the major parties, and a clearer division between

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them, than is supposed to be the case in the American system. The traditional wisdom concerning our two major parties assumes that each will construct as large an umbrella as possible, tilting modestly toward one side or the other of the political spectrum but maintaining a broad and inclusive appeal. But liberals are noticeable by their absence from the GOP—whatever happened to the Ripon Society?—and a similar process in the opposite direction may be seen developing among the Democrats. The general process is somewhat obscured at present because of the widely-perceived rejection by voters of Left-liberal prescriptions. But even if the political Center has drifted to the Right and many Democrats currently avoid too close an identification with the liberal label, the dynamics of the Reagan Presidency will likely result in voters being offered relatively unequivocal choices.

That will provide a delicate problem for the neoconservative intellectuals who already occupy an uncertain position within the Reagan coalition. Just how significant the neoconservatives have been to the conservative revival is a matter of considerable debate. Pines refers to them as being "enormously influential," but Phillips's assessment is more ambiguous. He does concede their importance as legitimizers of conservative ideas. Until some fifteen years ago, liberals dealt with conservative thought mainly by ignoring both the ideas and the people who put them forward. But the neoconservatives, most of whom had turned toward the Right only after achieving prominence and respectability while resident on the Left, could not so easily be treated as if they did not exist. As people of intellectual importance according to liberal standards, they could not entirely be written off when they reacted against the directions liberalism took in the 60's and beyond. Thus they made their presence felt and gave conservative ideas a currency normally denied them in the intellectual community. Recognizing that contribution, Phillips nonetheless suggests that the neoconservatives will probably exercise diminishing influence over the course of the 80's.

That may be, but a considerable number of neoconservatives have already found places within or on the fringes of the Reagan administration—more of them, one suspects, than would have expected to find themselves in such company a few years ago. Most neoconservatives originally saw themselves as voices of moderation within the liberal community, and few were comfortable with being associated with the Right (which is why they resisted the neoconservative label). They were not Republican by heritage, they had little natural sympathy for the business community, and they certainly did not identify with the New Right.

Yet the course their political journeyings took is not really surprising. Neoconservatism was born in a rejection of New Left/New Politics radicalism, and that original impetus naturally drew neoconservatives toward the Right. For most, their early hopes of making a difference within the Democratic party came to little, since those who establish the guidelines for intellectual and moral respectability within the party tend to consider neoconservatism an exercise either in bad faith or in loss of nerve. Some neoconservatives have maintained an uneasy political existence in a sort of limbo outside either party, but others have drifted, with varying degrees of uneasiness, into at least a quasi-alliance with the Reagan administration. The irony of their situation is that the more influence they attain with the Republicans, the less attention they are paid by their fellow intellectuals, most of whom continue to regard the term "conservative intellectual" as an oxymoron. (Neoconservatives have on occasion been accused of careerist opportunism; only someone ignorant of the mores of the intellectual community could make such a charge.)

THE most significant problem Reagan and his party face has nothing to do with ideology: it is, of course, the state of the economy. Phillips's charge that Reagan paid too little attention to social issues when he took office ignores the reality that he had no choice. Economic problems were so great, and voter concerns over them so overriding, that the President had to focus his energies there. The entire fate of his administration was hostage to his handling of the economy.

That remains the case today. The public simply will not give enthusiastic support in any area to a President who cannot restore some semblance of stability and growth to the economy. He need not solve all the problems, but he must get the indices moving in the right direction.

As noted, the economy is not, directly speaking, an ideological problem. Voters will applaud the supply-side program if it works and reject it if it does not; they are, on this issue, entirely pragmatic. Yet the condition of the economy carries ideological implications. As long as unemployment levels and the number of people below the poverty line continue to increase, the Republicans will remain vulnerable at their weakest point: the traditional suspicion, still lingering from the great Depression and compounded by the administration's tax and spending policies, that they are the party of privilege and lack genuine concern for the situation of the ordinary American. Reagan can explain the need for budget cuts and investment incentives as compellingly as is in him, but until the economy starts to revive, he will be unable to erase the image of Republican heartlessness that not even his transparently decent personality can contend against. Reagan believes, with John Kennedy, that a rising tide lifts all boats, but if the tide does not soon begin to rise, he will be sunk. Everything else in Reagan's program—from defense policy to social concerns—depends in considerable part on restoration of the

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economy. With that, he can get much of what he wants elsewhere; without it, he is likely to get very little.

It must always be remembered, of course, that politics is not a game in which one contends against oneself, even if some politicians and parties do have a habit of inflicting considerable self-damage. The economy aside, much of what happens to the Republicans will depend on what the Democrats do. If they have genuinely learned how much they hurt themselves during the 60's and 70's by dabbling in the New Politics, they could provide a formidable opposition. They are, after all, still the majority party. A positive Democratic program, similar to the one suggested by Penn Kemble in these pages last October ("A New Direction for the Democrats?"), and propounded by a candidate who understands that the party must transcend, in Phillips's nice phrase, "the culture and philosophy of Manhattan, Harvard, and Beverly Hills," could give Reagan or any other Republican a difficult run in 1984 and beyond. And indeed, Senator Edward Kennedy's decision not to seek the Democratic nomination makes it more likely than it had been earlier that the party will move in that direction.

Yet one should never overestimate the Democrats' susceptibility to good sense. There are still a number of liberals within the party—those, roughly, who share Kennedy's view that "we do not have to call ourselves neoliberals, or cozy up to neoconservatives"—who prefer defeat in the cause of virtue to victory achieved through compromise. And if that New Politics wing of the party gets its way with the candidate and platform, the Republicans could get back in even burdened with a half-crippled economy. (Prior to Kennedy's announcement, Phillips, who otherwise argued that no party was likely ever again to be able to put together an enduring majority coalition, thought that the Republicans would have one last shot at it if Kennedy were the Democratic nominee in 1984. The Republicans can only hope that a Kennedy surrogate will emerge among the Democrats to take up the banner of unelectable self-righteousness.)

THAT possibility aside, and taking into account only general factors and those matters over which the Republicans have direct control, their prospects for the short and middle term can be viewed as reasonably good—assuming always at least some improvement in the economy. The basic geopolitical trends in the country lean in their direction. If, loosely speaking, the Republicans are the party of the Sun Belt and the Democrats of the Frost Belt, that works to the Republicans' advantage. (Phillips makes the interesting point that if Richard Nixon had been running for President in 1980, he could have won by carrying the same states he did while losing in 1960.) On issues, it is dangerous to generalize, but it could be argued that the Republicans, for all their blind spots and all their historical burdens, have shown over the past fifteen years that they understand better than do the Democrats that this is a middle-class country. They must keep a sharp rein on the New Right militants, who, if unchecked, could do the GOP as much damage as the New Left earlier did the Democrats. But most Middle Americans are neither bigots nor fanatics, and Burton Pines's somewhat idealized portrait of them is closer to the truth than the dark one sketched by Kevin Phillips.

Finally, the Republicans have, in President Reagan, the most effective political leader of recent times. Yet with all due credit to the President's formidable skills, he and his conservative movement owe much of their political success to their opponents' excesses over the past two decades, as Pines's analysis suggests. A politics originating in reaction to ideological ultra-ism always risks ideological extremism of its own. Ronald Reagan is a deeply persuaded conservative, and no one could reasonably expect him to become something other than what he is. He has won being what he is. But governing is the art of the achievable. If Reagan can keep his ideological instincts as his servant and not his master—if, that is, he can govern remembering that he leads a country first, a party second, and only then a political movement—he could become the most successful American President in half a century.

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What the West Should Know About German Neutralism

David Gress

WHEN Helmut Schmidt lost a vote of confidence in Bonn on October 1 and accordingly was forced to yield power to Helmut Kohl and his Christian Democrats, it was assumed by many that the difficulties which had beset U.S.-German relations, and by extension the Atlantic alliance in general, would soon evaporate. It was the Social Democrats, we had been told by Kohl and others, who were the culprits; it was they who had indulged in an irresponsible neutralism and in anti-Americanism, threatening the cohesion of the alliance and the credibility of its military deterrent. What could be more logical than to expect that Kohl's government would swiftly and decisively change tack, turning away from the false allures of détente and *Ostpolitik*, and reaffirming the undying commitment of Germany to a strong European defense?

If such were the expectations, they have not been fulfilled, at least initially. For all their tough talk in opposition, and for all their protestations of friendship with America since assuming office, the Christian Democrats seem no more anxious than the Social Democrats for any changes in the present security policies of the European allies. Why this should be so has to do, at least in part, with a rather surprising phenomenon: the return of German nationalism.

That nationalism in West Germany should be enjoying any sort of revival today would have shocked any commentator or politician as recently as five years ago. It would have seemed even more absurd in the 60's, the era of the "end of ideology," when the societies of Western Europe—with West Germany in the lead—prided themselves on having shed the irrational antagonisms and fanaticisms of the past, nationalism preeminent among them. This step seemed especially significant in West Germany, where the very notion of national culture evoked memories of Hitler. In those days it was thought that the integration of Germany in the Western system meant the adoption of American modes of political and economic theory and social planning ("technical rationalism") and the rejection of anything that was felt to be specifically German, with the exception of a vague allegiance to the Enlightenment and to the literature and spirit of classical Weimar—the spirit of Goethe and Schiller.

In retrospect, it seems clear that a reaction had to set in, and so it did in the 70's, when the fundamental problems of West Germany's position and relations with its NATO allies and with the East could no longer be concealed, as they had briefly been during the Adenauer period and for a while thereafter. The most basic of these issues was the national question itself, the core of the "German problem" since 1945. Despite the apparent rise of a "republican consciousness," the need for a national identity had remained, and in fact was beginning to grow.

One German response to the problem of reconciling the need for a national identity with the reality of an apparently insoluble East-West conflict has been the *Ostpolitik* adopted by West German governments since the late 60's. Another has been a peculiar kind of neutralism—a neutralism with a strong element of German nationalist feeling. What is happening now is that the hopes and beliefs of what used to be a lunatic fringe in Germany are beginning to gain a hearing within the established intellectual and political culture. To understand why these national-neutralist views have spread on both the Right and the Left simultaneously it is necessary to have a brief look at their roots in German history.

NATIONALISM as a social and political force arose in almost all countries of the West around the turn of the 18th century. Its earliest and most dramatic appearance in a clearly recognizable form was in the French Revolution, which combined the inflammatory passion of mass violence and the overthrow of resented rulers with the equally magnetic appeal of a missionary ideology, destined to transform Europe in the image of Reason.

In Germany, the revolutionary ideas at first found a good deal of favor with intellectuals. But as the Revolution gave way to Napoleon's one-man rule and the mission of the French armies more

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and more clearly became one of expanding the power of France, sympathy changed to hostility and then to counter-nationalism. The key figure was Johann Gottlieb Fichte, who was still composing eulogies of the Revolution in 1794, but whose *Speeches to the German Nation* of 1808 became the crucial ideological text of the war of liberation against the French which began in 1813.

One year earlier, in 1812, another event of great future significance had taken place, namely, the secret Convention of Tauroggen by which the commander of the Prussian divisions in Napoleon's invasion of Russia, General Yorck von Wartenburg, changed sides and allied himself with the Russians. This event stands at the head of a tradition of Russo-German détente, even collaboration, which can be traced up to the present.

The way in which nationalism arose in Germany has colored the outlook and attitudes of German nationalists ever since. Primarily, it was anti-Western, especially anti-French. Romantics and conservatives (like the later Fichte) regarded the West as the source of all corroding evil, culminating in the pernicious "ideas of 1789"; statesmen like Bismarck saw in the West a threat to German interests. Both types found in Russia a natural ally, a fact recognized by Bismarck himself in the notorious "double-assurance treaty" with Russia of 1887, which forbade either party to join any third power against the interests of the other.

Seen from this perspective, World War I was a war of unnatural alliances—and it should be remembered that Russia went to war initially not against Germany but against the Hapsburg empire, over Serbia, which it was bound to protect. In general, there was very little anti-Russian propaganda in Germany during the war, in marked contrast to the violent campaigns in which German *Kultur* was opposed to decadent Franco-British *Zivilisation*, as in the notorious "Appeal of German Writers" of 1914. The most famous signatory of that appeal was Thomas Mann, whose later opinions are of some interest: he became a devoted democrat in the 20's, was perhaps the most prominent anti-Nazi exile in America during World War II, but finally returned to Europe in 1948 disgusted with American materialism and "mindless" anti-Communism. Among Mann's last public acts (in 1955) were two speeches on Schiller, given demonstratively at Frankfurt in the West and Weimar in the East. Though it may seem offensive to compare him with some of the adherents of nationalist neutralism in recent decades, there can be no question that his example has been of great significance to the more intellectual supporters of neutralist plans and ideas.

Of all the gestures of German authorities on behalf of Russia during World War I, the most fatally meaningful was undoubtedly the permission granted to Lenin to travel from Switzerland to Petrograd in 1917. Many historians have seen pure opportunism in this: the Germans knew that Lenin's presence in Russia would increase the confusion there and perhaps force Russia out of the war. Certainly in hindsight we can appreciate the grim irony of the move. At the time, however, there was something else at work, namely, the Russophile tendencies of the German military. Perhaps foreseeing a loss of the war in the West, or at best a stalemate, the German army leadership, which by then had replaced civilian power in the state, hoped for a future alliance with a grateful Leninist regime, an alliance of "outsiders" against rich Western "insiders"—Britain, France, and the United States.

In the desperate situation of the 20's, that alliance did seem to be taking shape. Secret treaties gave German officers permission to train troops in Russia in exchange for instructing the Red Army, in violation of the Versailles agreement, while the Rapallo treaty of 1922 openly aligned Germany with the Soviet Union in a by-now traditional pattern of Russo-German understanding. There was also an additional factor at work: many groups in Germany which had rejected power politics when they were conducted by the "bourgeoisie" now suddenly greeted a rapprochement with the Russian Communists with enthusiasm. In the words of Kurt Tauber, the historian of postwar German nationalism, "The ties to the Soviet Union . . . were also ties of proletarian sympathy and revolutionary understanding for a fellow nation of have-nots who were seeking, just as Germany must seek, to construct an anti-capitalist order under national auspices."

Thus was the old military sympathy for Russia allied to the sympathy of radicals of every stripe (but not of the Social Democrats) for the Soviet regime. It was as though defeat in the world war had unleashed a whole set of movements, each with proposals and visions that violated the conventional categories of Left and Right, but had enough common elements to help form an ideology. That ideology, which took shape in the slightly deranged intellectual atmosphere of the early Weimar years, was based on the belief that there was a special "German way" of organizing political, social, and economic life (*der deutsche Sonderweg*).

In the face of military defeat and internecine political conflict which made it unlikely that the "German way" could assert itself militarily in the world, what might its mission be? Perhaps, said some, it could be a "third force" between Western liberal capitalism and Russian Communism, which were bound to come into conflict. Defeated Germany lay between them: was this circumstance not in itself a symbol, a call to action—especially in view of Germany's long-standing special relationship with Russia?

The slogan of the "third force" has, of course, been used in many contexts in the history of ideologies: by conservatives, liberals, socialists, groups of "nonaligned" nations—all those who have felt it opportune to evade or deny the reality of pressing political choices. The one common element of "third-force" doctrines is their anti-cap-

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italist, anti-Western bias; indeed, they seem to arise in circumstances where a deeply divided society is faced with the challenge of Western technological and political predominance. This was certainly the case in Germany in the 20's, as it is throughout much of Africa and Latin America today.

Probably the earliest example of a "third force" doctrine in Weimar Germany was to be found in the ideas of the so-called *Tatkreis*, the conservative circle associated with the journal *Die Tat*—"The Deed." According to this doctrine, the third force was to be found among the "young peoples," i.e., Germans and Russians, who ought to join together and create a closed economic region with a siege economy repudiating free-enterprise capitalism. There is no doubt that the example of Stalin's "socialism in one country," which began to take shape in the late 20's, was of great importance to the ideologues of the *Tatkreis*. As the world economic crisis deepened in 1930 and after, respect for Soviet heroism and intransigence became further strengthened by the belief that the new Soviet economy was free of the ills that seemed necessarily to follow from American-style capitalism.

The *Tatkreis* was a significant element in that cultural effervescence of the Weimar period known as the conservative revolution. Most of this was destroyed by Hitler, who had as much contempt for the intellectuals of the conservative revolution as for the "Jews, capitalists, and Marxists" whom he considered his main enemies. The peculiar form of nationalist neutralism implied by the "third force" thus died out temporarily, although two members of the *Tatkreis*, Hans Zehner and Giselher Wirsing, provide a crucial link to the centers of opinion in today's West Germany; the former became editor-in-chief of *Die Welt*, flagship of the Springer concern and one of Germany's three leading dailies (1953-66), while the latter ran the respected Catholic weekly *Christ und Welt* from 1954 to 1970.

If the kind of nationalist neutralism associated with the *Tatkreis* was generally abhorrent to the Nazis, the idea of "closed regions forbidden to intervention by outside powers" did enjoy a certain vogue under Nazism thanks to the jurist Carl Schmitt, a key figure in 20th-century German thought comparable in significance to Heidegger or Marcuse. For a while Schmitt enthusiastically supported Hitler, although his passions seem to have cooled when he found that the dictator was not really interested in his essentially defensive ideas. (Recently there has been a certain revival of interest in Schmitt, who is still alive at ninety-four, even though the new national-neutralists of the Left do not always seem to realize the source of some of their beliefs.)

The defeat of the conservative resistance to Hitler within Germany, and then the total defeat of Germany itself in the war, meant that the national issue henceforth would have to make itself felt in drastically new ways. The necessary foundations for any discussion of that issue after May 1945 were the facts of defeat and occupation, the almost immediate beginnings of conflict between the victors, the arrival in the Western zones of twelve million Germans driven from East Germany, and the evidence of the Nazi murder of six million Jews. Essentially, the contours of the national question and the forms of postwar nationalism in Germany to this day have been shaped by the facts of 1945—obviously so, since those facts still persist.

THE career of the national issue since 1945 can be divided roughly into three phases: an initial period from the time of total defeat until the decision to admit West Germany to the alliance and to encourage rearmament (1955); an intermediate phase when the national issue was quiescent for various reasons, including the concentration on economic growth and the predominance of the technical approach to policy (mid-50's to late 60's); and the current phase, beginning with the explosion of student radicalism and terrorism and the collapse of the intellectual establishment, running through the 70's and culminating—so far—in the rise of environmentalism, neutralism, and a new form of belief in the "German way" and the "third force."

During the first phase, the national issue seemed, paradoxically enough, to be far more useful to the Social Democrats (SPD) than to their rivals in the newly-founded Christian Democratic and Christian Social Union parties (CDU, CSU). After the destruction of the resistance movement, the SPD represented the only coherent national political tradition to survive Hitler reasonably intact. In 1945, the party leaders, some returning from exile in London and some, like Kurt Schumacher, emerging physically broken but spiritually unbowed from the camps, were determined to establish a democratic socialist regime in what was left of Germany, i.e., the four zones of occupation. Their appeal to the masses was twofold: on the one hand, a unified national government morally acceptable to the world, presiding over a peaceful and disarmed Germany, and, on the other hand, nationalization of all heavy industry and abolition of the private capitalism of the banks and industrial magnates who, whether or not they had helped Hitler to power, were in any case morally bankrupt. The Social Democrats still believed that Germany and not the Soviet Union was the main threat to what was left of Europe, but they held that the creation of a "zone of peace" in and around Germany would guarantee stability for the foreseeable future.

There was yet another element in Social Democratic thinking, one that has endured and is very much alive today. It was the belief that peace in Europe would be best preserved through a system of collective-security agreements between East and West, rather than through a defensive military alliance such as NATO. To a believer in collective security, alliances are very much a second best and often a danger in themselves (because "provocative"). One cannot understand either the *Ostpolitik* of the 70's or the problems of communication be-

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tween the Reagan administration and Western Europe today unless one bears this fundamental tenet in mind.

By 1947, Soviet actions in the Eastern zone had demonstrated to most Social Democrats that hopes for the speedy formation of a national government with Soviet help were probably futile. One man who had immediate experience of those actions was Ernst Reuter, the staunchly anti-Communist mayor of Berlin, who fought a brilliant fight, ably supported by intellectual opinion, against Communist attempts to gain political control of the city and end the Western presence. He and other SPD leaders, including Schumacher, without yielding their positions of principle, began to support the Christian Democrats and their leader Konrad Adenauer in his efforts to create a provisional, but at least German, government in the Western zones. The attempt was successful, and the Federal Republic of Germany came into being in September 1949.

Within two weeks the Soviets and the German Communists in the East proclaimed their own state, the German Democratic Republic. National division was now a constitutional fact, although—and this is a crucial point—the West German republic from the beginning asserted its claim to sole representation of the German state as such, which was assumed to be temporarily in abeyance until such time as free elections could be held throughout the country. A corollary of this claim was the Hallstein doctrine, named after the architect of German foreign policy in the 50's, which stated that "the Federal government will view the establishment of diplomatic relations with the so-called German Democratic Republic by other states as an unfriendly act tending to aggravate the division of Germany."

Despite these and other clear signs of Adenauer's concern for national unity, there was a lingering sense in some quarters that all efforts had not been made to save it. Even after the SPD had given up the struggle in the face of clear evidence that the Soviets were opposed to any form of national government not under their control, agitation continued against the government and the Western powers who allegedly were preventing attempts to talk to the Soviets.

IT IS in this period, 1952-54, that we find clearly anticipated the national-neutralist coalition of the progressive Left and the ex-conservative Right which has returned to prominence and influence in the last couple of years. Some of the key figures, in fact, are the same, like Rudolf Augstein, editor-in-chief of the weekly *Der Spiegel*. Today, Augstein's editorials are full of anti-American suspicions, sympathy for the Soviets, and even, as was the case during the Lebanon crisis of 1982, poorly disguised anti-Semitism. This bias directly continues the neutralist outlook of the early 50's, according to which the pro-American stance of Adenauer's government was the main obstacle to German unification. If only the West understood Soviet "security needs" and gave appropriate guarantees, it was said, Soviet objections to unification would cease. This claim was usually associated with another, namely, that West German participation in a Western defense alliance would render national division permanent by alienating the Soviets and making it impossible for them to support unification.

From a Western point of view, of course, these people—Augstein, the former *Tatkreis* member Hans Zehrer, the Frankfurt editor Paul Sethe, and others—had it backward: America was not interested in forcing West Germany into NATO only to protect American interests. Rather, Adenauer and the Americans realized together that without a military deterrent, in the future there might be no constitutional democracy in any part of Germany at all. Ultimately, the difference between national realists like Adenauer and the romantic national-neutralists came down, and still comes down, to a fundamental difference in their perception of the Soviet Union. To the latter, there simply is no Soviet threat, and hence there are no issues that cannot be resolved by negotiation.*

Aside from the national-neutralists of the early 50's there were also some more activist stirrings of nationalist sentiment, and these too were overwhelmingly anti-Western. Many former Nazis evinced grudging respect for the Soviets, whose methods seemed more forthright, less hypocritical, than those of the Western powers. Also in evidence was the old military connection: a number of German POWs in Russia had formed a "National Free Germany Committee" in 1943, and now, in the 50's, the Russians tried to play on the bitterness felt by these and other German officers against the Western allies. On several occasions, "congresses" and rallies were called, with funds provided by the East, to protest West German "collaboration" with the U.S. and Britain. By about 1960 most of these activities had ceased, although one final event looked forward to the later phases, the organization of a "German National Assembly Association" in 1961 to combat the threat of a CDU-SPD coalition and to combine all the remaining anti-NATO splinter groups in a program of national unification.

DURING the second phase in the postwar career of the national issue the only important flurry of activity occurred in connection with the sudden sharp recession of 1966, which led to that very coalition of CDU and SPD that had been feared by some nationalists. As a result, the National Democratic Party (NPD), encompassing both aggressive and nonaggressive neutralist groups, enjoyed a brief renaissance. How-

* It should be remembered, in the interests of historical justice, that this was precisely the original *American* position, held by FDR, the Joint Chiefs, the War Department, and such leading diplomats as Averell Harriman and George F. Kennan, at least until early 1946.

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ever, when the SPD formed its own government in 1969 (with the Free Democrats), and the CDU became the opposition party, the wind was taken out of the sails of whatever agitation the NPD could muster. As for the SPD itself, in 1959 it had abandoned the commitment to a socialist economy, and there were no longer signs of anti-CDU propaganda over the national issue. Economic growth and the expansion of the welfare state seemed to absorb all the energies of the country.

More important than the rise and fall of the NPD, however, was a gradual shift in perceptions and opinions, one consequence of which was that national neutralism of the Augstein-Zehrer variety was able to make a surprising comeback in the 70's. What happened was a result of many factors: the gradual spread of the collective-security outlook, the intellectual and cultural anti-Americanism of the Vietnam period, a general shift to more "critical" and revisionist attitudes regarding the international situation and the Soviet Union, and so forth. So when the national argument began to gain a hearing again in the early to mid-70's, it aroused a greater echo than might have been expected.

By 1970, the major parties had abandoned national unification as a direct goal. The Hallstein doctrine was dropped when the SPD took over the government, and even the CDU eventually accepted the Eastern treaties of 1970-72 with the USSR, Poland, and East Germany. However, the *Ostpolitik* that succeeded the Hallstein doctrine was in a sense aimed at unification by different means.

The declared purpose of *Ostpolitik* was to relieve tension in Central Europe by symbolically ending the historical conflict with Poland and expanding the opportunities for communication with East Germany. The effect of this would be to preserve a feeling of common national heritage and continuity, but in a way that could not possibly threaten the Soviet Union. This in turn would lead, in accordance with the traditional SPD outlook, to a collective-security agreement that could pave the way to a gradual dismantling of the military alliances on both sides.

There was certainly a lot of naiveté and ignorance of political facts in this line of thought, which was in any case immediately rebuffed by the East. In the early 50's East Germany had actively exploited West German neutralism and tried to drum up internal opposition to Adenauer and to West German rearmament. Now the SPD's attempts to elicit an acknowledgment of national unity despite political division was met with complete hostility, in the form of the East German policy of *Abgrenzung*, closing the state to ideological contamination from the West. The internal contradictions of *Ostpolitik* might thus have rendered it harmless had it not been for the general crisis of the alliance over the Western policy of détente, compounded by the rise of the peace movement in the late 70's.

On the surface the peace movement, which was overwhelmingly neutralist and environmentalist in orientation, seemed to lack any trace of German nationalist feeling—nor had there been any such feeling evident in the student rebellions of ten years earlier, the disillusioned alumni of which could now be found in it in large numbers. But a new element had crept in, picking up the arguments of the early 50's and even some themes of the old conservative revolution to form an unhealthy and only too typically German blend of illusion, resentment, and political romanticism.

The first intimation of this development, in the mid-70's, was the sudden reappearance of the national issue as a respectable subject of debate. Leading politicians and writers from all sectors of German opinion began discussing, in the words of the 19th-century Romantic poet Ernst Moritz Arndt, *Was ist des Deutschen Vaterland?* ("What Is the German's Fatherland?") A gist of what was coming by way of an answer could have been gleaned from a verse in that poem:

Das ist des Deutschen Vaterland,
wo Zorn vertilgt den welschen Tand,
wo jeder Franzmann heisset Feind,
wo jeder Deutsche heisset Freund

(There is the German's fatherland,
where anger purges foreign ways,
where every Frenchman is my foe,
and every German is my friend.)

Substitute "American" for "Frenchman," and remember that "every German" includes those in the East, and you have the recipe for the current wave of nationalist neutralism. As for "anger purging foreign ways," one has only to think of the recent attempts to blow up American military installations—and personnel—to realize how literally these sentiments are being taken.

THE revival of the national argument received a seal of recognition in a history of Germany published in 1978 by Hellmut Diwald, a professor at Erlangen. This curious volume begins in the present and through 800-odd pages wends backward in time, finishing in 919, a date seen by Diwald as the origin of German history. What is even more curious is its frankly apologetic, nationalist tone, most striking in the account of World War II. Finally there is the by-now familiar inversion by which the Russians are somehow respected and understood by Diwald in a way that the Americans are not. Although most of Diwald's professional and scholarly colleagues have repudiated the book, his popularity has grown immensely among peace activists, who anyway do not read professional journals or even the literary pages of newspapers.

In 1982 Diwald contributed to a remarkable volume of essays and tirades which well illustrates the kind of national-neutralist nonsense that has become respectable in today's Germany. The title of the volume is *Die deutsche Einheit kommt bestimmt* ("German Unity is Bound to Come").

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Apart from Diwald's contribution, which is little more than an angry denunciation of America and the Western alliance for preventing German unification, the book contains essays by a number of left-wing journalists and peace activists. The final chapter, written by an ex-functionary of the *East* German Socialist Unity party, offers "concrete proposals" for dissolving "the blocs," i.e., NATO and the Warsaw Pact, and for establishing economic and political union. Needless to say, these and other proposals in the book are not "concrete" at all, but merely the products of wishful thinking. Nowhere is there an honest assessment of the political and historical situation, or any evidence that these supposedly well-informed and intelligent people have the faintest idea of how to get what they want. The chapter by the lone East German contributor is such a typical example of Communist newspeak that one does not know whether to consider him an agent or a particularly hapless defector.

A variant of the national-neutralist outlook which is becoming particularly popular in Germany is the notion of a "new European identity" that is supposed to be emerging "against the superpowers." This viewpoint, because it emphasizes Europe, is acceptable to intellectuals who for various reasons still feel uncomfortable with nationalism, yet it is characteristic of its German exponents that they see a great role in this new Europe for a united, peace-loving Germany. The most skillful exposition of the "new European identity" is found in a book by the journalist Peter Bender, *Das Ende des ideologischen Zeitalters* ("The End of the Ideological Age").

This book has been the subject of intense debate in Germany. Essentially, Bender believes that the U.S.-Soviet conflict need no longer concern or involve Europe. He detects a definite tendency in both halves of Europe to disown the respective superpowers and to seek common understanding "from the Atlantic to the Bug." Ideology is no longer important, only power, and Europe has no interest in taking part in the infantile quarrels of Reagan and the Russians. Ultimately, Bender foresees a neutral and independent Europe, free of entanglements and enjoying good relations with all regions of the globe.

Bender's book sounds several of the favorite motifs of the new European neutralism, especially in identifying "both superpowers" as equally guilty of global conflict and equally responsible for the division of Europe—an identification which conveniently ignores every relevant fact about the institutions, policies, political structure, and history of the U.S. and the USSR. Related to this is the Orwellian assertion that America has prevented Western Europe from acting independently for its own interests, whereas the truth is that whenever the U.S. has suggested a common European security effort, or has tried in any way to transfer responsibility for national survival to the European states themselves, its offers have been instantly refused. Western Europe does not really appear to want the military or political independence which, according to Bender and others, it has been denied for so many years.

But the fact that the arguments of Bender, Diwald, and others are grossly mistaken and misdirected has hardly affected their intellectual respectability. Nationalist neutralism is no longer in a political ghetto in Germany, and this has been noticed by the rulers of the East as well, who after almost thirty years of disuse have resurrected the idea of national unity as a weapon against NATO. In late 1981, the East German poet Stephan Hermlin "spontaneously" decided to call a peace conference of German writers in East Berlin which was duly attended by a whole range of famous names, including the trinity of Heinrich Böll, Guenter Grass, and Siegfried Lenz. The fact that the same Hermlin, as a loyal Soviet hack, had done all he could to subvert German cultural unity at the notorious Writers' Congresses in Berlin and Breslau in 1947-48 appears to have been forgiven and forgotten.

The surviving intellectual descendants of the conservative revolution have likewise been delighted by the present turn of events. The New Left, with which they have hitherto had little contact, suddenly seems to have accepted their anti-Western arguments and their hopes for a revival of the "German way." Germany's leading conservative thinker, the south German writer Armin Mohler, has expressed sympathy with the peace movement in his journal *Criticon*, deploring the hastiness of some activists but welcoming their urge to do something, anything, about the national problem. Mohler, who in the past has stressed the need for defense against the East, has lately tended more and more to criticism of the West, as though the most urgent task for West Germany were to free itself of the Atlantic connection.

There is thus a symmetry of outlook on the Left and the Right, or at least among certain influential elements in both the Left and the Right, that is supportive of nationalist neutralism. People holding these views are found in the CDU as well as in the SPD, the Free Democrats, the media, and the universities. And that is why the change in government in West Germany holds out less hope for the future cohesiveness of the Western alliance than many in the United States, and especially in the Reagan administration, have wished to believe. The generation now taking power in West Germany has forgotten more than would have seemed possible even a few years ago.

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From Generation to Generation

A Memoir

Dan Jacobson

On my desk, as I write, is a book of an unfashionable and awkward size. Fourteen inches long and eight inches wide, it has the shape of a somewhat enlarged sheet of foolscap. It is cheaply produced. The paper is coarse, fragile, and pale brown in color rather than white; the covers are made not of cloth but of grayish, absorbent cardboard; the spine is covered by a strip of black material which has come away from much of its length; the pages have evidently been sewn together either by hand or by some extremely primitive machine.

For reasons which will be explained later, I can read only the introduction of this book. I know that it was put together from the posthumous writings of my great-grandfather and distributed by one of my great aunts. The person who gave it to me told me that it is of no interest and of no merit whatever. The introduction, on the other hand, says that the book was compiled so that the memory of the author's "loftiness of spirit" might be passed "from generation to generation." Since I am unable to read it, all I can do with the book is to describe how it came into my possession, and what happened to both the person who gave it to me, and the woman responsible for producing it.

The story told below is, in other words, a domestic one, a piece of family history. It deals with madness, inconsolable loss, the movement of people across continents, and the murder of those left behind, as well as with our instinctive belief that order and continuity truly express the nature of our lives, and that everything which is not orderly and continuous is a mistake, a perversion of what has been, what should be, and what will be.

Family histories have no real beginnings or ends. I may as well begin in the middle, then, with a telephone call to my home in London, which summoned me to Hampstead hospital about a mile away. An uncle of mine had given my name to one of the nurses and had asked her to phone me. She told me that he had been brought in a few days previously, after a fall. He had been in a confused state. And now? He was a good deal better.

That was not how my uncle saw his condition. He had just one word to describe what he was going through. It was a word he had invented, though he was obviously unaware of having done so.

"Tormentation!"

He said it loudly several times, with long intervals between each exclamation. He had managed to lift his head off the pillow by hanging on to the tightly tucked-in sheets and blankets that came halfway up his chest; he had used them like ropes to haul himself up. Now he let go, and his head sank back. But his eyes, filled with despair and self-pity, remained fixed on mine.

The ward was underground; his bed was the one nearest the door. Just a few feet away was a kind of landing or vestibule, through which I had come, with a flight of stairs and an elevator shaft of metal grilles and angle-bars going up from it. The elevator itself was like an ancient, upended streetcar; it was constantly ascending and descending, with a whine and a hiss and a clashing of its doors. Needless to say, its noise was one source of the tormentation my uncle was going through.

Looking around, I could see others. Because the ward was subterranean, it had no windows at all. Whatever daylight there was entered from above, by way of thick glass slabs let into the ceiling. Through them, if you tried hard enough, you could just discern the wavering outlines of the walls of the courtyard above. The patients were trapped like fish under ice, able only to stare upward at what was imprisoning them. Moreover, the ward was not only underground but also circular in shape. Its hub was a plastered column of immense girth; its rim, the outer wall; its spokes, the beds ranged in two rings, with a space between them. Everything was thus set out in concentric bands: wall, beds, passageway, beds, hub. If you turned your head too quickly they all revolved with you. No doubt they did it even more readily if you were wounded, or had a fever, or had taken a variety of drugs, or had had some part of your body excised, or had lain there for a few days listening to the groans of others in a worse plight than your own.

Dan Jacobson, the English novelist, essayist, and critic is the author of several novels, including *The Rape of Tamar*, *The Wonder-Worker*, and *The Confessions of Josef Baisz*. His most recent book, a study of the Bible, is *The Story of the Stories: The Chosen People and Its God*.

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And then there were the nurses. Or so my uncle claimed. The sight of one of them passing his bed—a fresh, harmless-looking girl—suddenly produced whole sentences from him. "These women here," he said, "are merciless. They're like demons. All of them. They haven't one shred, not one scrap, of human feeling. No sweetness."

He frowned, he pursed his lips, he reached forward with his eyes and face, so to speak, without moving his head. It was an expression which belonged wholly to my mother: I saw her, not him, when he made it. "Never a smile," he said. All the creases on his face deepened and ran into one another, and he began to cry. His sobs were like sneezes: abrupt, spasmodic, each one coming after an interval of silence. He wiped his eyes and nose with his fingers; then reached for a handkerchief under his pillow and did the job again. Before falling silent he brought out the most formal sentence I had yet heard from him. "Their cruelty is indescribable."

He lay on his back, no longer looking at me. His eyelids fluttered a few times, then they came down and stayed down, and he appeared at once to fall asleep. His full, strong, square mouth was closed; it was the one part of his face which still seemed to know its own purpose, to be in possession of itself. For the rest I saw only meat-colored abrasions, gauze dressings, sunken cheeks, wide, vulnerable nostrils that flickered or twitched irregularly, a gray-blue stubble of beard. He was wearing a striped, hospital-issue pajama jacket; the top button was undone, revealing an almost foamlike growth of grizzled hair that came right up to the neckline. To the side of his bed was a steel cabinet; unlike the others in the ward, its top was pathetically bare. There were no books on it, no magazines, no flowers, no delicacies in tins or boxes; only a carafe of water, a drinking glass, and his glasses neatly squatting, with folded shafts and lenses tilted upward, on the shining surface.

The next bed was occupied by another old man, older than my uncle by perhaps ten or fifteen years. He also lay on his back with his eyes closed. One of his hands was held in the fierce clasp of a woman only a little less gray and shriveled than himself, who was sitting on a chair to the side of the bed; while he slept she studied his face with such absorption, with an expression of such tenderness, it looked almost wanton or abandoned. Beyond them was a young man both of whose arms, clad in plaster casts to above the elbows, were motionlessly thrust out before him; on the cabinet beside his bed, in pride of place, was a red motorcycle helmet with various legends painted in white on it: "Zap!"; "Go man go!"; and so forth. Presumably he had injured himself in a crash on his bike, and the helmet was put there like a totem or fetish, to show the world that he was still what he had been before the smash, and worshipped where he had worshipped before. There were various other pajamaed and bathrobed men sitting and talking to their wives; there was another youngster who was fixedly reading a thick textbook from a pile of books on the cabinet next to his bed; there was a bed wholly screened-off by dark green curtains, through which no one passed and from which no sound came.

And so on, as far as my eye could make it around the hub, and then back to my uncle. Since he showed no sign of waking, I decided to look for the head nurse, to learn as much as I could about the circumstances which had led to his admission. I found her in a little office on the landing, virtually under the stairs. She was a thickset, small-faced woman of middle age, almost rubbery in appearance somehow, though not at all in the sense of being pliant; rather, she was resistant, not easy to get at, strictly a non-conductor of emotions and responses. She wore the faintly striped dress and full-length, starched white apron, with a watch and various badges of rank pinned to it, which was the uniform of the place; her hair was pulled tight into the elaborate cap she wore, an item as stiff and formal in shape as an architectural feature on top of a column. She was not, I learned, the nurse who had phoned me; in fact, before divulging any information about my uncle she demanded that I explain my relationship to him and how I came to be visiting him. When I had answered her questions satisfactorily she proceeded to tell me what she knew—which was not all that much more than I had already heard. Apparently he had slipped and fallen in the street, and had struck his head on the pavement. So far as was known no vehicle or cyclist had been involved in the accident; some anonymous person (from a shop, she thought) had phoned for an ambulance. One could imagine the scene: the old man on the pavement, the passers-by, the stoppers and starers, the helping hand eventually extended, the small drama of the ambulance's arrival and departure. That had been five days before. He had been concussed on his arrival, but not very seriously. That wasn't the problem. Not the real problem.

She regarded me steadily; then, convinced that her dark gray eyes and thick brows had done their job, she surprised me by lapsing into euphemism; indeed, the language of the nursery. "He's been very naughty," she said. "He's been taking a lot of stuff that hasn't been very good for him."

A silence followed. I had nothing to say to what I had just heard. In response to my asking her when she thought he would be discharged from the hospital, she said that he might be ready to go in a week or ten days. They wouldn't want him to leave any sooner. And then? Well, they had got his address from the diary that had been found in his pocket, and had phoned his landlady to tell her what had happened. She had said that he had paid the rent for his room until the end of the month, so there wasn't anything to worry about as far as that was concerned. He'd be able to go back there

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when he left the hospital. But they were anxious that he should have "calmed down" by then.

From what I had seen of him there seemed little chance of this happening while he remained there. But I did not say this; instead I asked if he could be moved to another ward, or perhaps just to a bed farther from the door. The nurse said that she would see what she could do; but the voice in which she said these words, and the unblinking, unyielding stare which accompanied them, told me that she could do what she liked, and that that was exactly what she was going to do. Never, but never, anything else.

My uncle, who had been very naughty, who had been taking a lot of stuff that wasn't good for him, was still asleep on his back when I returned to the ward. His mouth seemed to have tightened as he slept; deep lines, like those on the jaw of a ventriloquist's dummy, now ran straight down from the corners of his lips into his chin. I left him lying like that; as if he were waiting to be given more words to say.

My uncle the junkie! My mother's oldest brother, the addict! The rabbi's oldest son, the hophead!

As a novelist I might be tempted to repudiate what I have just written. As an autobiographer I cannot do so. I have no choice. It happened. It was so. Out there in South Africa, in the bare, colonial provinces, he had virtually invented addiction for himself. Or on his own terms, at least. He was not a young man when he became an addict; he was old, in his early fifties, as old as the century itself had been at that date. He wasn't in the fashion then; he had preceded it. He wasn't the black sheep of the family: on the contrary, he was its most adored, most admired figure, the oldest brother of a flock of sisters who bowed their heads to him, a conscientious husband, the father of two promising children. And if, in relation to his condition, such ironies were not crude enough, there was yet another, perhaps cruder still. For many years his profession had been that of social worker; he had been a paid adviser to people who were incapable of managing their lives for themselves. Put that in a novel! Part psychiatrist, part employment officer, part teacher, part father and uncle to mankind in general, he had cultivated the manner appropriate to these roles: stern but compassionate, attentive yet already weary of what he was about to hear, pompous and yet conscientiously aware of his own frailty, too.

That was how I had left him in Johannesburg, when I set out for Europe: the continent from which he and his sisters had come a generation and more previously. Then I began to hear vague talk from visiting relations and acquaintances of his having had a "nervous breakdown," and of "spells" he had had in mental hospitals. His wife had left him. His job was in danger. At last one of the visitors said, "Don't you know? Do you really not know? He's a drug addict." He had originally become addicted to pethedine, apparently, which had been given to him during an attack of sciatica; but he would now take absolutely anything if he had to: tranquilizers, pep pills, codeine, morphine mixtures, cough syrup, aspirin.

What all these had done to him I saw for the first time when I flew back to South Africa to attend my mother's funeral. His glasses low on his nose; his eyes cast eternally down, with a thick light in them or on them; his hat set far back on his head, like that of a vaudeville clown; his feet moving in a random manner, as if at every step they expected to find the ground an inch or two higher than it actually was; his mouth pursed forward and opening every now and again, as he smacked his lips and uncomfortably pushed his tongue against the back of his lower teeth; his fingers fumbling continually in the shallow pockets of his vest; a look of blank incomprehension on his face, together with an agonizingly slow, sunken determination to be left out of nothing: it was in this shape that he arrived in Kimberley, my hometown, by plane from Johannesburg. It was in this shape that he followed the coffin of his sister, who had so much admired his sagacity and benignity; that he poured on to the coffin the obligatory shovelful of dry Kimberley sand; that he sat through the lunch at the house, after the funeral, with the other members of the family; that he went out for a walk with me, once the lunch was over.

He took the walk slowly. He had to. We went along an unpaved road near the house. When I had been a child the veld had begun where we walked: tufts of grass, thorn trees, ant heaps, rock outcrop, red earth, in disorderly sequence and inconsequence, stretching away forever. Now there were new houses at the side of the road, each one with a wire fence and the beginnings of a garden before it; on the other side was an embankment of earth and some playing fields. Our footsteps crunched on the sand. My uncle's hat had come forward over his eyes; his glasses were so low they were in constant danger of falling. My mother was in her grave, under just such hot, dry sand as we were walking on. I remembered our arrival in Kimberley, for the very first time, almost thirty years before: she had passed me through the open window of the train to my father, who was waiting on the platform below. I had been four years old. It was all over.

My uncle staggered and sighed. He was sunk so deep in his narcotic stupor it was quite impossible to tell if he really knew what the occasion was of his being there, or the significance of the handful of loose earth he had let fall on the echoing wooden box below. Yet the noises he made were those of grief: or if not of grief, then of unhappiness. In some corner of whatever consciousness was left to him he knew that he was in disgrace; he had betrayed the trust his sister had had in him, and had failed a solemn, sorrowful occasion. White stuff collected in the corners of his mouth and remained

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there, for all the constant movement of his lips. As if under some grotesque disguise I could see in him my mother's vivid brown eyes, lighter than his own, and her brow. We said nothing to one another. Once or twice he stopped and stared around. The sun hung motionlessly in a bald sky. Then we went back to the house. His sisters tried to straighten his clothes and shoved his glasses back on his nose; then they put him on the afternoon plane and flew back to Johannesburg with him.

Six years after that funeral he was living alone in London. As I have already said, it was his second migration. In his youth he had gone from Lithuania to South Africa; now, as an old man, he had moved from South Africa to England. During the first migration he had had to act as "the man of the family," for his mother had recently been widowed and he was the oldest son among a large contingent or consignment of children; almost half a century later he was the dependent, the child, the one in need of care. Jobless, wifeless, homeless, he had followed his grown-up children, who had come to England to advance their academic careers. But as luck would have it (and the timing was just bad luck, as they showed by the care they took of him subsequently) both the children and their spouses departed within a few months of his arrival on one-year fellowships to the United States: one to Princeton, one to UCLA. There my uncle would not or could not follow them. He settled down in London to await their return. With the help of his son, who saw to these matters before his departure, he found a room near the Finchley Road subway station; he was put on the list of a general practitioner in the neighborhood; he was enrolled in a couple of evening classes; for the rest he was left to fill his time as best he could. The charity for which he had worked in Johannesburg, and which had put up with him after his disintegration for far longer than any commercial firm would have done, provided him with a pension that was small but sufficient for his needs.

At first I used to see him pretty regularly. He would come for lunch with my wife and myself about once every two weeks, or perhaps a little more often. He was always early and always apologetic for being early. He wore a blue or brown suit, a relic from his days as a professional man, and brown shoes which he kept in a high state of shininess; around his neck hung a brave if ill-knotted tie. He was obviously making an effort to keep himself together. I knew there were a few other houses, those of other members of the family, and of friends, to whom he made visits similar to the ones he paid to ourselves; he also went into town sometimes to meet visitors from South Africa who had let him know that they were coming.

What else? Well, he went to libraries and read the papers, like many other pensioners. He listened to the radio. (He never acquired the television habit, apparently.) Mostly, he walked about. He told me this and I could see it for myself, for he always arrived and left on foot. Even when it was raining he would not take a bus or a train. Instead he would wait out the worst of the downpour, swathe himself in a voluminous plastic raincoat with a hood, and march haltingly but with much determination into whatever was left of the shower. Sometimes I walked part of the way with him; sometimes I stood at a window and watched him go: relieved that he was going; guilty for not having pressed him to stay longer or come again sooner; incredulous, above all, at what was most incontrovertibly the truth about both of us—that he was he, and I was I. When I had come to Johannesburg, the big city, at the age of seventeen, and was living in digs, his had been one of the houses I could go to for a meal and conversation; I had borrowed books and money from him from time to time, and had occasionally gone for a ride in his little French car with him, his wife, and their two grave children. And before then, long before I had reached that stage, he had been one of the largest of the fixed stars in the mysterious yet all-embracing family firmament which I took as much for granted as I did the light and darkness of the real sky which hung over me. And now. . . .

He was a difficult guest. This was true even during the first few months of the period I am writing about, when he was trying hard to manage, to keep himself going. On the one hand he had his *idées fixes* on a number of subjects: among them, the contemptible nature of all religions, and of the Jewish religion in particular; the incomprehensibility of grown-up men reading (let alone writing!) novels; the state of intellectual darkness, not to say childishness, in which mankind had lived before the important discoveries of Freud about human growth and motivation; the automatic superiority of all things British, and especially of things upper-class British, over all others; and so forth. On the other hand, he had his sighs and groans, which would go on for minutes on end: shattering sighs and wholehearted groans, in alternation with vacant stares ahead of him. Then something would distract him (the food put in front of him, or the entrance of one of my children) and he would launch himself again on one of his hobby-horses. Actually, he believed them to be battle-chargers: he knew that my own views on most of these subjects, if not all of them, were different from his own, and he never advanced an argument without hoping it would provoke me in some way. Not provoke me to counterargument, really; just so long as it provoked me. I could see this in his eye. Behind his glasses, within the strange indeterminacy between pupil and iris which was one of the consequences of his addiction, there lurked something obstinate and perverse; something not to be budged, something which looked at me with a dull gleam of triumph. Or

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indifference: that too being a triumph of a kind. He'd shown everyone, the whole damn lot of them, a thing or two: his wife, his children, his father the Orthodox rabbi, his widowed mother, his admiring sisters who had taken their bearings from him, and had devotedly adopted all his intellectual attitudes. They had followed him into secularism, into a contempt for the East European past and everything that smacked of it, into a veneration for saints of the 20th-century Enlightenment like Bertrand Russell, Bernard Shaw, Havelock Ellis, Sigmund Freud (of course), A. S. Neill, J. B. S. Haldane, and others whose books had been on his shelves at home in Johannesburg. That is, when he had had a home. But who can tell about such matters? For all one knows he may even have felt that he had shown those saints a thing or two, as well.

Not that the sighs and groans weren't also wholly sincere. The price he had paid for this triumph was a terrible one, and he knew it. Once, for no reason that I can recall, he brought a couple of photographs to show me: one taken just before the departure of the family from Lithuania, and another taken just after their arrival in South Africa. In the first the entire group is gathered on the elaborate verandah of a wooden house; in the other they stand in the back yard of a cousin's house in Johannesburg, with washing line and corrugated iron fence much in evidence; in both of them my uncle is given a position in the center of the picture, as befits the new head of the family. He wears a serious suit, with many buttons and with small lapels shaped like dog-ears on a book, and he has a serious look on his face. His hair is far thicker and blacker than it was to be decades later, but it starts growing in exactly the same place from the same bays above his forehead, and is compelled to go in exactly the same direction, straight back. Standing over me, unable to bear the pain of looking at the pictures, and unable to look away from them, my uncle said only, "Ach! Ach!" over and over again.

He had never really spoken to me autobiographically about life in the old country. All my questions about it had been turned aside with some generalized expression of distaste for everything that had characterized that life: the religion to which his father had devoted himself being always his first target, with all its odious, irrational taboos and restrictions. But he had only negative things to say about the rest, too: to him it seemed to have been all a dreariness, narrowness, slovenliness; rotten with indolence and resentment of anything other than itself; littered with the monuments of misplaced scholarly zeal which the religion had inspired; redeemed only by the promise of escape—escape, above all, to any corner of the English-speaking world. Now, as he had voluntarily brought these pictures to me, and as he evidently did not want to put them away, I thought this might be the opportunity to get him to say something detailed about his past. But he paid no attention to my questions. "Ach!" he still groaned. "Ach!" Finally I asked him a direct question about his father, my grandfather, the man missing from the pictures, whose place he had been called on prematurely to fill. What sort of person had he been? That question did produce an answer. "Benighted!" he said grandiosely. That was all. I put the photographs in his jacket pocket, and they remained there until the end of the visit. I did not come across them when I gathered his possessions together many weeks later; but I did the job so rapidly that that hardly meant anything. Perhaps they were still in the pocket of his jacket.

THE deterioration which set in some time after the episode with the photographs took two forms. Firstly, he came to visit me less often; secondly, when he did come he had less and less to say for himself. He had also begun to run down physically: it showed in his walk, in his eyes, in the constant movements of his tongue inside his closed mouth. He had lost his appetite. He was always in need of a shave. Even his shoes, about which he had been so mysteriously punctilious, no longer shone as before. Sighs and groans were virtually his only utterances now; when he did speak he was inclined to mix up Johannesburg and London, and the headlines of the day with those of a year or two before. I wondered how long he would be able to keep going, and what form the final collapse I was expecting would take. He managed to surprise me, all the same. Visiting the house one day (it was the last visit of that kind which he was ever to make, though neither of us knew it) he announced that he was going "on holiday" to Israel. That someone in his condition should have dreamed up such a plan was surprising enough; more surprising still, in a way, was his destination. He had never visited Israel before, and had always spoken of the country with a hostility that had a peculiarly personal element of vexation in it. To him, Israel and the whole Zionist endeavor were nothing more than yet another example of the Jewish passion for self-separation; he seemed to feel that the very existence of the Jewish state was a half-secularized (and all the more insidious, therefore) affront to the universal enlightenment, or enlightened universalism, to which he genuinely believed he had dedicated his intellectual life.

And now he was going there for a holiday. I could not understand it and did not believe him until he showed me his airline ticket and the vouchers he had bought for a fourteen-night stay in a Tel Aviv hotel. Then I had to try to make plausible to myself the idea of his getting to the right terminal at Heathrow Airport, on the right day and at the right time, negotiating the passport and customs checks, and presenting himself at the appropriate departure gate for his plane. None of it was easy to imagine. But I no more offered to take him to the airport than I had pressed him to

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come more regularly to the house than he was now in the habit of doing. Of course I felt bad about these inner abandonments of him; but doing more for him, I was sure, would have made me feel worse, in other ways. How does one know when one's duty to anyone else is fulfilled? The answer is one never does. One makes up the rules as one goes along, and breaks them as one goes along. Every case is different from every other. I wished him bon voyage and told him that I looked forward to hearing what he made of Israel. Who knows, I said in feebly jocular fashion, he might come back converted to the Zionist cause. My uncle's manner had always been humorless, and the drugs he had taken had done nothing to change him in that regard. "Never," he said with much seriousness. "Such a thing is impossible."

It was May, the crescendo month for growth, light, color, bird-song, rain that left the streets ablaze, playful skies, armies of builders and decorators in splashed white overalls perched on ladders outside suburban homes. I walked some way with him through the suburb, then we cut across a corner of the Heath. The hawthorns were covered so thickly with blossom they looked as if sheets of pink and white had been thrown over them and left to dry, Irish country fashion. We shook hands when we parted. He was eager to get away.

EVENTUALLY I was to learn that he had in fact gone to Israel. But I never found out how he had managed to get there (and back) on his own, or what he had made of the place. We talked about it only once subsequently, and by then the visit seemed to have gone pretty much out of his mind. All he had to say about it was a vague, uninterested recollection of the flight: "So quick, nowadays. Amazing really." We were sitting together on a bench when he said this, in a little enclosure made by a pair of low, U-shaped hedges facing one another across a goldfish pond. There did not seem to be any fish in the pond, among the water lilies; it would have been difficult to see them, anyway, because the whole thing was covered with close-mesh netting wire. Whether the netting was there to protect the fish from predatory birds and cats, or to keep the inmates of the institution I was visiting from trying to drown themselves in the pond, I have no way of knowing.

Behind tall brick walls on both sides of a gateway, past wide expanses of turf and a few flower beds, amid a group of gaunt buildings with windows netted over like the fish-pond, I had found my uncle waiting for me. It was autumn then: not the season of mists and mellow fruitfulness, but a rather dry, stiff affair, with leaves congregating noisily in gutters and a shallow, expanded sun hanging in the sky. The drive across London to get to the mental hospital in which he was confined had taken hours: some bureaucratic procedure had determined that a man who lived in the northwest of the city should be consigned to a hospital far in the southeast, where London gives way to areas which cannot be called countryside, merely not-London. But since I had been the one who had invoked that bureaucratic procedure, so that I might be relieved of the burden of his life and its manias, I was hardly in a position to complain.

What had happened was this. Two days after the first call I had received from the hospital in Hampstead, there was another. This one, from a clerk in the general office, came early in the morning. He told me baldly that my uncle was expecting me to come and pick him up in an hour's time. Pick him up? To do what with him? Take him home of course, the clerk said, in patient, burly tones, and hung up.

It was still summer, then. The morning air was scented with dew and exhaust fumes. Before leaving for the hospital, I had a brief conference with my wife about whether or not I should bring my uncle back to the house. The conference was brief because neither of us wanted him to come. Among the many tangled emotions I felt about this decision was, inevitably, one of resentment against him for having obliged me to make it.

I found him pacing up and down the pavement. The street was narrow, a sloping Hampstead defile. To one side was the brick bulk of the hospital; on the other, elevated high above the street, was a pub with an open terrace or platform in front of it. On summer evenings people of a predictable kind gathered there: walkers of their dogs across the Heath and collectors of china, young men in publishing and industrial design, teachers in technical colleges and their physiotherapist girlfriends. A shabbily elegant crowd, with some money but not too much; some intellect but not too much; some freedom from convention but not too much.

My uncle belonged to another world. He was dressed, as always, in one of his old suits; presumably the one in which he had been admitted to the hospital. It was too big for him, now that the shrinking of old age had him remorselessly in its grip. Abraded, patched, wrinkled, gazing anxiously about him, he resembled a child whose mother has providently bought every item of his clothing two sizes too large for him. He came to the car the moment I stopped. He came to it with a reproach, not a greeting.

"Where have you been? I've been waiting and waiting." He opened the back door and climbed in, practically going down on all fours in his eagerness to get away. "So let's go. You know where to go? You know the way?"

I asked him about his things. "Yes, my things," he agreed vaguely, climbing or wallowing about on the back seat. Then, sitting up, thrusting his face close to my own, he was suddenly inflamed. "What, there's nothing! Just take me away from here!"

I HAD turned round to speak to him. The more I saw the unhappier I became. It was his tremulousness that worried me most. His

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eyelashes, nostrils, and lips seemed to be vibrating in front of me; his limbs were more grossly afflicted. He couldn't keep still for a moment. At the same time he was talking, or issuing orders, with a frantic, rambling rapidity. If I didn't take him away at once he'd get a taxi. A man could always get a taxi. I must give him the money to pay for the taxi. Who could believe it, that they'd let a man out of a place like that without a penny in his pocket. He'd told the woman to lend him a pound, how much was a pound, she had his name and address, he wouldn't run away with her pound. But no! All they knew in there was how to torture you, never to give you anything. . . .

And much more of the same sort. Then, in midphrase, he had opened the door of the car and was off, his old man's eager gait carrying him to the corner of the High Street. I went after him and grabbed hold of his arm. He gave me a sliding, muddy glance, then set off back to the car as rapidly as he had fled from it. He opened the door and sat down inside, looking at me through the window with the long-suffering expression of a man who doesn't know what all the fuss and delay is about, but is deliberately restraining himself from asking. The only trouble was that the car he was now sitting in was not mine.

I coaxed him out of the stranger's car and got him to sit in the front seat of mine, before going into the hospital. The man at the desk in the main entrance did not have anything to tell me, so I went down to the basement ward once again. The head nurse I met this time was more sympathetic than the last; it turned out that she was the one who had phoned me originally. She obviously felt that my uncle was not nearly ready to leave, but, she said, they could not stop him from doing so; it was impossible to keep someone in the hospital against his will. No, there was nothing for him to take away: he was wearing the clothes he had come in, and she had put his wallet and glasses in his pocket. And a toothbrush, she added. She also had some medication for him—and here she went through a little collection of pill containers arranged on her desk, each of which had a kind of paper ruff around its neck, until she found the one she was looking for—which she was rather anxious about. It was most important that he should follow the instructions about taking the pills: one every four hours. She undid the ruff encircling the container and passed it over to me.

Her cool, clean fingers met mine. We exchanged a strange look: one of complete frankness about the fraudulence of the transaction in which we were engaged. My uncle might swallow all the pills at once, or lose them all, or discover them in his pocket days later; one thing certain was that he would not take a pill every four hours. All else aside, he would never be able to figure out that twelve o'clock, say, was four hours after eight o'clock, and that pill-taking time had thus come round again.

Without any animosity the head nurse said, "He hasn't been an easy patient." She got to her feet, a tall, slender woman, in nunlike garb, and walked a few paces with me to the foot of the stairs. The elevator shaft was silent, breathing out oil and dust; the smudged cream walls and brass-edged steps of the stairway already looked as melancholy as a memory, something from the past. Pronouncing my uncle's name as if it were a difficult foreign word, the nurse wished him the best of luck. I went upstairs and found him sitting in the car exactly as I had left him. But he had slowed down a little, which was a relief. His air was now more plaintive than possessed. He had no difficulty in remembering his address.

WHEN I got to his house there followed yet another interview with another strange woman, another paid surrogate for mother or wife; the third of its kind I had had. This one was with his landlady: a well-dressed woman not much younger than my uncle, and about the same height, but much more fleshy. Her shiny, strapped, high-heeled shoes reminded me of spiders, for some reason. Adorned with rings, lace, rouge, blackened eyelashes, and sausage-shaped curls, she occupied the ground floor of the house, and received visitors in an overfurnished living-room-*cum*-office-*cum*-shrine. The shrine, which I had time to study only on the visit I was forced to make to the house the next day, was devoted entirely to mementos of her late husband. There were medals embedded in velvet; framed certificates testifying to his achievements in swimming and mechanical engineering; photographs which showed him with his wife or in the company of other men, in civilian clothes or in the uniform of a Central European army, with rolled-up diplomas in hand or leaning back at a formal dinner. Some of these items were hung on the wall, but most were affixed to a fretted, gabled piece of furniture suitable for no purpose other than the one to which it had been put. It had a tall back and, as it were, no front: projecting from it was just a single drawer, on top of which lay a thick black book that could have been a Bible or a work on mechanical engineering.

It was an impressive display. However, the style of the woman who had organized it was one of fluttery politeness and femininity. This turned into histrionic helplessness once she had had a proper look at my uncle. It was a shock for me, too, to see him in different surroundings from before, away from the context of the hospital. Staring about him uncomprehendingly, dwarfed by his baggy clothes, bandages alternating with purple abrasions on his scratched-up, patched-up face, he looked disastrous. To make things worse, a renewed fit of restlessness had seized him. He twitched, fidgeted, snorted, grimaced, began making little runs in the limited space available between the landlady's pieces of furniture, and suddenly left the room at a trot. We heard him go upstairs and open a door;

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a moment later he had started to move furniture about. Or so it seemed. Things fell, footsteps sounded back and forth.

The landlady did not let me escape until she had extracted my name and telephone number from me. "This is a quiet house," she said. "I can't bear noisy conditions"—using the word, so far as I could make out, in its medical sense. She would not take the plastic box of pills which the ward nurse had given me; hopelessly enough, I had thought she might supervise his taking of them. I went upstairs to my uncle's room, to give the pills to him, and to say goodbye. He met me at the door. His suit was now brightly adorned with three or four letters in airmail envelopes, which he had crammed unopened into the breast pocket. They were from his children, presumably. I tried to persuade him to get into bed: there it was, occupying almost one half of the long, narrow room; it was even made up, after a fashion. The air was breathlessly stuffy after his long absence, and I opened the window at the other end of the room from the bed. I also looked for a pair of pajamas in a chest of drawers, found them, and proffered them to him. But he wasn't interested. Why should he get into bed? What was I talking about? It was still broad daylight. He was going for a walk now.

I left the room with the pills in my pocket. The phone was already ringing by the time I got home. It was the landlady telling me to come and fetch my uncle: he was frightening her and disturbing the other lodgers; she wasn't prepared to have him in the house any longer. I spent a good part of that day either on the telephone or in the car; among other things I went back to his room and tried to persuade him to return to the hospital. It was after I had failed in that attempt that I decided I was going to try to have him committed, legally committed, to a mental hospital. The fact that it was a Friday, and that the weekend had just about begun, did not make it easier to have him examined.

THE following morning there gathered in the landlady's living room an undersized psychiatrist in a brown suit, a female psychiatric social worker (both of whom were employed by the Borough), and myself. Apparently their signatures would be sufficient to secure a committal. The social worker had a clipboard on her lap and a pencil in her hand. She was a very young girl in a blue dress with white spots; her fair, straight hair, which hung down to her collar, was newly washed. The psychiatrist sat in silence, looking at his shoes, which were no great distance from his eyes, or at the ceiling. The landlady put her head around the door every now and again. Upstairs my uncle still seemed to be moving furniture about: less noisily than on the previous day, but pretty continuously nevertheless.

Nothing could have made the meeting anything but a painful one. The psychiatrist did his best to prolong it, and to exacerbate its unpleasantness. Of all those I met who were paid for what they did in relation to my uncle, he was the only one whom I felt to be actively hostile to me. Even the first of the nurses I had spoken to had not been hostile, merely bossy and indifferent. This man, whose responsibility for my uncle's welfare would end with his putting a signature to a piece of paper, or refusing to do so, had it in for me. Whether out of libertarian sentiment, or out of resentment at having his Saturday morning spoiled, he was determined to make me as uncomfortable, morally speaking, as he could. "We're not going to put your uncle in a mental hospital for your convenience," he said several times, a remark to which I had no reply, since it was indeed partly for my own convenience that I was trying to arrange to have him put there. "Where do you want him to go?" I asked, but he dismissed the question. "That isn't the issue." The social worker sat with her eyes cast down, busily shading with her pencil a small area of the paper clipped to the board on her lap. She had a sympathetic manner, but clearly the psychiatrist, with his red face and his sharp little nose trained on the ceiling, was the one who counted.

At one time he sent the social worker to bring my uncle downstairs. The noises we had heard from upstairs had led me to think he would be in a frenzied state, but it was as if he knew, once he had entered the room, that he was in the presence of an authority different from those he had encountered before. He was quiet and docile, like a bewildered child. I had never felt so acutely how much the whole pattern of his life had come to resemble a luridly foreshortened and doubled over version of what we all have to go through, eventually, if we live long enough. He had been hardly more than a child when, with a child's zeal, he had adopted the role of the adult: he had been father to his siblings and husband to his mother long before he had married and fathered his own children; later he had even made a profession of being a father (or secular rabbi!) outside the home. Now he sat on a couch between a psychiatrist and a girl younger than his own daughter, childishly anxious to do whatever they wanted of him. The only trouble was that he simply could not manage the difficult, grown-up tasks they set him. They asked him what day of the week it was, and he did not know. They asked him the name of his landlady, and he could not tell them. They asked him how long he had been out of the hospital, and he could not remember being in it, let alone leaving it. His voice became hoarser and hoarser with each failure, his demeanor more bewildered. He did not look up at all. What kind of inquisition was this that he was being put through? What were these strangers really after? Couldn't they see how unfair they were being? Questions like these were visible, as it were, in the lines of his neck and shoulders, and in the slow movements of his hands in his lap. Finally he fell silent; he would answer no more questions;

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they could do what they liked with him. Only his hands continued to move, to twist and rub against one another. The sound was quite audible in the silence of the room.

The social worker took him upstairs, like a child who had failed to perform adequately. The psychiatrist took some papers out of his briefcase and consulted them with an important air. It was during this lull that I had the opportunity of studying the landlady's shrine to her late husband. The social worker returned, and the strange bumping noises from upstairs recommenced. The landlady made one of her periodic appearances. The psychiatrist asked me to leave the room, so that he might phone ("in confidence") my uncle's general practitioner. I waited in the hallway outside. He came out of the room a little later and told me that he was going to interview my uncle again, upstairs, away from what he called "other influences." He threw a nasty look in my direction on the last phrase. It seemed that not only did I wish to lock up my uncle for my own convenience, I was also in the business of terrorizing him (literally) out of his wits.

Apparently my uncle did no better away from those "other influences" than he had done in their presence. But he was noisier: we could hear his raised, angry tones, though none of the words he used. The psychiatrist came downstairs and entered into a conversation with the social worker about summoning an ambulance. The possibility of alerting the police in case of "resistance" was also mentioned. The social worker offered to drive my uncle to the hospital in her car, if he was agreeable. The psychiatrist signed various papers from among those he had put out on the table, and the social worker put her name under his. Then she clipped copies of the papers to her board. It had been done. He had been committed.

He offered no resistance to being taken away by car. The last glimpse I had of him that morning was in the passenger seat of the social worker's Ford Escort. Herself like a child playing grown-up, her hair fallen forward across her face, she was absorbedly leaning over him to fasten his safety belt. Once they had gone, the psychiatrist left in his car. He did not say goodbye to me or to the landlady. I promised the latter that I would return shortly to clear my uncle's stuff from the room.

It was noon by the time I left the house. Under a sky of sunshine and vague cloud the streets were crowded with people going about the tasks they had had no time for during the week: buying groceries, visiting laundromats, having their hair done, taking their children to shoe stores.

Among the suits, ties, socks, folders of letters, gray flannel trousers, transistor radios (two), and the rest of the stuff which I threw into the suitcases I found in my uncle's room, and into the boxes I had brought with me, was the book I mentioned at the beginning of this memoir. I did not know what it was; it struck me at the time solely because it was the only book in Hebrew in the entire collection. It went into a box on top of all the others: among them Arthur Koestler on the nature of scientific discovery, Frazer's *The Golden Bough* in the abbreviated, two-volume edition, *The Rationalist Annual* of the previous year's date, an inscribed copy of one of my own novels.

It was all quick and easy enough. My uncle did not have that many possessions, after all. However, he did have a plentiful supply of "certain articles," as he was to describe them many weeks later, that were a problem to me. In clearing up I came across a multitude of glass and plastic containers of pills and capsules of all shapes, sizes, and colors: mostly white, of course, but also blue, red, red-and-white, mottled pink, purple, green. There must have been many hundreds of pills in the collection. Most of the names on the containers meant nothing to me. What was I to do with them? After some hesitation I put them all in a big plastic bag, which I took downstairs and threw into a trash can standing in a passageway at the side of the house. Subsequently I was to feel it had been officious of me to have acted in this way. I also learned subsequently that I had not followed the approved procedure for disposing of unwanted pills: one should flush them down the toilet.

Anyway, these pills were hardly "unwanted." My uncle wanted them. Many weeks later, on his discharge from the mental hospital, the very first thing he did was to look for them among his belongings. He was extremely disappointed not to find them. I know this because I was with him, in the room in my house where his stuff was stored, when he discovered the loss he had suffered. He did not speak of the pills as such, of course; not by name. All he did was to hunt rapidly through the bags and boxes, then to go through them a second time, rather more slowly, then to ask me if I was sure that everything I had brought from the room was there. I assured him that it was. "Funny," he said. "There are certain articles missing. I can't understand it." Another search yielded nothing; nor did the further, vague, euphemistic questions he put to me. I wasn't prepared to confess to him what I had done. Thereupon, though all the way from the hospital he had been insisting that before proceeding on the next stage of the journey it was absolutely necessary for him to "sort out" his things, he lost interest in them completely.

It must have been about three or four weeks after my first visit to the mental hospital that I went there to bring him away. He had been discharged with the full agreement of the hospital authorities. His daughter was due to return from the States shortly; in the meantime he would stay with a childless couple, distantly related to him and to me, who were about the same age as himself. I had intended taking him straight from the hospital to their flat in Kensington, but he would not hear of it. He had to sort out his things first. Strangely

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enough, it had not even occurred to me, when I made the detour to my house, as he had requested, that his pills were what he was really after.

We stood in the room with the open bags and boxes around us. I tried to press on him some of the other articles that were lying around: didn't he want to take this sweater, that pair of shoes, these vests and underwear? No, he did not. Insistent though he had been in the car, his manner had also been very remote. Every remark I made had seemed to take a long time to reach him, and everything he said also seemed to have to travel a great distance to come out. At one point, I remember, he said, "The trouble with society nowadays is that it's too complicated; too much is expected of people; if they can't cope they punish them"—and I was filled with the eerie conviction that he was referring to the cross-examination about days of the week and the name of his landlady to which he had been subjected on the morning of his committal. Now, in the disappointment of not finding his pills, he seemed to retreat even farther than before; it was as if he would never have occasion to speak to me again. My eye fell on the odd-shaped, solitary, shabby Hebrew book lying on top of others in a box. To try to rouse him, to bring him back, I picked it up and asked him, "What is this?"

He looked at the book in my hand. It would not have been surprising if he had not answered at all. Eventually he said, "That? That's a collection of my grandfather's writings—so-called. It's terrible stuff. Absolutely worthless. Talmudic *pilpul* [hair-splitting], all of it. He knew nothing else, poor man."

I opened the torn cover of the book and looked at the faded photograph which made up the frontispiece: an old man with a gray beard and a steep-sided skull-cap fitting wholly over the top of his head. His beard was so ragged at the ends it looked like some kind of hanging moss. Faded and blurrily reproduced though the picture was, I could see my uncle in the man's bald brow and broad, fleshy nose; or the old man in these features of my uncle. It was all one.

My uncle said, "Do you want the book? You can have it. With my compliments."

THAT was how it came into my possession. It is a book that only a devout student of the Talmud could read. That is a literal observation, not a literary one. It is printed in a special Hebrew script ("the Rashi script") which was used specifically for works of this nature, and which it is difficult even for someone who knows the ordinary, square Hebrew alphabet to penetrate. Moreover, there is hardly a sentence in the book which is not crowded with references—references so abbreviated as to be in effect a private code reserved for scholars like the author himself—to chapters and verses in the Bible, and to rulings and discussions in various tractates of the Talmud and its different rescensions. For all I can make, essentially, of the one hundred and eighty-four large, double-columned, closely printed pages of the book, it might as well be written in cuneiform.

The title page and the introduction are, however, in conventional Hebrew script. They can be read by anyone who has a modicum of the language. This (in translation) is what the title-page says, and how it is laid out:

BOOK
ZVI (GENIUS) YA'AKOV
Questions and Answers, Interpretations and Explanations, in the Order of the Talmud and the Commentaries

BY

The Honored Master and Teacher, the Great and True Genius, the Prince of the Torah and the Storehouse of Light, a Lion among his Companions, the Righteous and Everlasting Upholder of Truth, the Deer of Israel and the Genius of Jacob, Our Instructor and Rabbi, ZVI YA'AKOV OPPENHEIM of Saintly and Blessed Memory, Sometime President of the Rabbinical Court of Kelme (Lithuania).

Published by the supplier of Books from the House of the Widow of Rabbi Hotnauer (of Blessed Memory), Teacher of Righteousness, 24 Franziskana, Warsaw, Poland.

Printed in Letland 1920

There then follows the introduction or blurb:

ZVI THE RIGHTEOUS ONE

The son must honor the father, and the student his teacher. So as we approach the task of bringing forth this wonderful book, the child of our master's mind, it is right for us to declare from generation to generation his greatness, and to describe his loftiness of spirit, and to proclaim on this gateway the righteousness and wisdom to which it serves as entrance.

This book brings together but little of the sayings of his lips and the writings of his hand, which gave such comfort to those who thirsted for his words. Much was lost through the evils and calamities which came upon us. The failings of the book spring also from ZVI YA'AKOV's indifference to his own writings, in comparison with his zeal to do the work of God and to bring the light to Israel. Most of what we have gathered together was written only as brief notes for himself. We have dared to present these fragments because they are all that has been left behind by ZVI YA'AKOV, the wonder of Israel.

He was born of one of the most highly connected families in Israel, the OPPENHEIMS, who for many generations had been laboring for the Torah. His father, the Master of the Torah, was Rabbi MICHAEL YITZHAK, of blessed and pious memory, and his modest and dutiful mother was TSIPPE, of blessed memory. Even in his childhood he revealed his wonderful talents, like a prodigy, and before he had completed his ninth year he was studying Gemara

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[commentaries on the Talmud] without the aid of a teacher. He came to warm himself at the great light of Rabbi LEVI SHAPIRA in Trischik, who included in his book, "The House of Levi," some interpretations of the Torah made when he was only eleven years old. . . .

And so on and so on. Some human detail is added: such as the fact that at times Zvi Ya'akov would draw both the shutters and the curtains of his room "in order not to be distracted by those passing to and fro outside," and would spend a whole day and a night studying incessantly by the light of a single candle; during the more joyous festivals and holy days, on the other hand, he would make merry with the boys from the Talmud school "and even with infants." No indication is given of the date of his death, though the contrast is repeatedly drawn between the strength of his devotion to the Law ("like iron") and the weakness of his bodily frame. At the end of the introduction a host of nephews, nieces, cousins, brothers-in-law, sons-in-law, and others come in for a flattering mention. Some of these are delicately thanked, it would seem, for contributing funds which made possible the printing of the book. Finally there is a request to those who wish for further copies of it to write not to the printer but directly to Benne Oppenheim, the author's daughter, in Kelme. She was evidently the one who was responsible for bringing out the compilation.

Twenty-three years after she had completed her work, the German troops who were occupying Kelme during World War II gathered together in the town's synagogue what was left of its Jewish community. The doors were locked, the building was doused with gasoline, and it was set alight.

Among those who died in the blaze were Benne, who must have been an old woman by then, two of her sisters, and their husbands. All their children died with them.

MY MOTHER had told me in the vaguest terms what had happened to that part of her family which had remained in Lithuania. I suspect that her vagueness had sprung not so much from a desire to protect my feelings as her own. It was from one of my aunts, on a visit to South Africa that took place long after the events I have described here, that I learned the story.

By that time my uncle, too, was dead. It is remarkable how seldom I saw him after the day he gave the copy of Zvi Ya'akov's book to me. The last time we were alone together, in fact, was when I drove him to the people with whom he was to stay. On our arrival his hosts came out onto the sidewalk; while we talked, in a street buffeted by the wind and noisy with fallen leaves, they surreptitiously eyed him, trying to size up the task they had taken on in inviting him into their house. I think they were reassured by what they saw. My uncle, though still remote in manner, was quite matter-of-fact about his being there and his status as their guest. I declined their suggestion that I should come in for a cup of tea. One topic of conversation that came up, I remember, was the disease called "scrapie," which attacks sheep; the wife was doing research on it in the institution which employed her.

I do not think I saw my uncle more than three or four times in the years that followed. When his daughter and her husband returned, he went to live with them in the house they had bought on the outskirts of a city in the north of England. There he remained until the end of his life, which came seven or eight years later. He never "recovered"; he never, so far as I know, suffered a collapse as thoroughgoing as the one I had witnessed. He was looked after with much devotion by his daughter and son-in-law. In return he helped around the house; he did some baby-sitting when he was up to it, and some fetching of the children from school; he went for long walks; all his daughters' friends talked to him in cheery tones.

The last time we met was in the company of my brother, who was visiting from South Africa, and was especially keen to see him once more. We went for a drive on that occasion, too: one of a very different kind from the last I had taken with him. Following the instructions we had been given, the three of us drove to a village a few miles away, parked the car, and passed through a gate to one side of the village churchyard. We followed a path alongside hedgerows for some distance, and suddenly, around a turning, there it was, the view we had been recommended to find: a small, placid river, a wooden footbridge over it, elm trees rising to a great height from the fields nearby, and more distant trees seeming to browse in the late afternoon light, the masses of their leaves making up not one horizon, but many horizons, in the direction both from which the water came and that toward which it was going. No other people were about. Everything stirred—the dark water plucking at the supports of the bridge, the flags that grew along the bank, the leaves on the trees, the sheen on the grass—and everything was still, poised, calm, settled, perfectly in place. We spent some time there. On the way back my uncle burst out, his cheeks curiously puffed and his eyes squeezed shut, as if it was impossible for him to contain the words any longer, "I never expected to live so long."

It was the nearest he ever came, at least in my presence, to explaining himself. The next time I went up that way it was to attend his cremation. There was no religious ceremony of course; only music, and a speech by someone who had known him in Johannesburg. Then machines hummed and the coffin passed out of sight.

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Why Not Pragmatism?

Michael Levin

MY FRESHMAN English teacher told us that pragmatism was a businessman's philosophy, an assessment I have never seen any reason to dispute. Not that this is said in derogation. It is true, as Jacques Barzun stresses in a lucid if unduly worshipful study of William James,* that "pragmatic" has been so debased—from an educator it means "practical," from a journalist "unprincipled"—that it is hard today to appreciate pragmatism as the expression of America's national ethos. Yet if, to begin with, pragmatism is taken merely as the maxim, "Test ideas by their consequences," it already taps the spirit of America between the 1880's and 1914, the years of its development by James, Charles Sanders Peirce, and John Dewey.

It was during this "Reign of William and Henry," as Barzun dubs it, that America invented the modern world by doing what others not only thought too difficult, but lacked the imagination to think of at all. Commerce abetted this transformation of life, as entrepreneurs offered an unprecedented array of new products for consumers to judge with their wallets. The images of this admirable time—Edison literally and figuratively electrifying New York, Orville Wright aboard the Kitty Hawk Flyer, Theodore Roosevelt manning a steam shovel in the Isthmus of Panama—are all of men not resigned to an immutably fixed world. You do not build skyscrapers or conceive the zipper by clinging to the formulas of the past. You try something new and see what happens.

But pragmatism would no longer interest and attract contemporary thinkers if it merely codified the spirit of a more vigorous America. The recent appearance not only of Barzun's book but of A.J. Ayer's *Philosophy in the Twentieth Century,* which devotes as much space to pragmatism as to any other movement, and of Richard Rorty's eagerly awaited *Consequences of Pragmatism,*† testifies to its enduring importance. Pragmatism offered revolutionary answers to two perennial problems: the nature of thinking and the nature of truth. What is more, say its partisans, its novel account of thought shed new light on the nature of morality.

IF THE pragmatic maxim I cited—"Test ideas by their consequences"—is taken in isolation, it appears to sanction believing whatever makes one happy. This widespread misunderstanding, reinforced by James's talk of "the will to believe," would make pragmatism a philosophy not for businessmen but for the village idiot. Pragmatism is better understood when seen against the intellectual background of its day.

Like the early G.E. Moore and Bertrand Russell, pragmatists were reacting against the high-sounding but empty abstractions of the Hegelianism entrenched at Harvard, Cambridge, and Oxford. A.J. Ayer tells this story well, describing James's shock at "the blandness and callousness" of F. H. Bradley's complacent assurance that discord is an illusion, "with the implication that pain can be assumed to 'disappear into a higher unity.' "

But the roots of pragmatism run deeper, into classical epistemology. Philosophers from Plato onward have taken man as primarily a *knower,* whose intellectual life consists in the attempt to copy reality. A properly working mind reflects nature. This "spectator" view of knowledge is part of ordinary speech. We say a true belief "fits the facts," a phrase elaborated by philosophers into the *correspondence* theory of truth. But the metaphor of truth as correspondence to fact, natural as it sounds, quickly breaks down. The assertion, "Five strawberries are in the bowl," fits the world in an obvious way: here is my cereal bowl, there within it five strawberries. But what does "There are no giraffes in Hoboken" correspond to—the sheer giraffelessness of Hoboken, or the confinement of all the world's giraffes elsewhere? And what facts fit "Cubism would have puzzled Rembrandt" or "Odysseus must have been quite a guy, assuming he existed"?

Just as language is ill-suited for matching the

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* *A Stroll with William James,* Harper & Row, 288 pp., $16.50.

† *Philosophy in the Twentieth Century,* Random House, 283 pp., $22.50; *Consequences of Pragmatism,* University of Minnesota Press, 237 pp., $29.50.

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world, there is, insist pragmatists, no fixed world to match. Any account of the world "in itself"—of its people, rocks, stars, or molecules—already reflects the work of man, dividing up an inherently unstructured flux of experience to suit his purposes. If a pond with a goldfish makes two things rather than one large wet thing with a small moving part, it is only because we segment reality in that way. We cannot compare our thoughts to things in themselves, for things come already filtered by our thoughts: "No 'copying' can take place," says Barzun, "because no reaching out to 'over there' is possible." Rorty goes him one better: "It is impossible to attempt to step outside our skins and compare ourselves with something absolute. . . ." For even a neutral given is, for him, a mythical abstraction. Reality thus becomes conceptualized all down the line.

But the most intriguing gap in classical epistemology only became clear after Darwin had proposed that almost all aspects of living nature are adaptive. In Darwinian terms, what is thought, as classically conceived, *for*? What advantage does beholding confer? Instinct meets some of our needs, and wholly insentient feedback systems—of the sort found in computers—could presumably meet the rest. Since passive beholding would not benefit organisms, it is hard to see how spectators could ever have evolved.

The pragmatist cuts these knots by denying that ideas serve as copies of anything. They are, instead, devices to guide action. Man is fundamentally an active, not a contemplative, creature, and his fundamental question about the world is practical: how to replace the stimuli bombarding him with more agreeable ones. His ideas are means to actions that in turn yield new experiences, the experiences yielded being what pragmatists call an idea's "cash value." What used to be called the search for truth is the adjustment of belief in light of the experiences it leads to. Believing is as natural as breathing. In keeping with this biological slant, pragmatists expect that unsatisfactory ideas, and those who think them, will die out, much as any maladaptation does.

Pragmatists were hardly the first to notice that beliefs control behavior, but they were the first to maintain that action exhausts what ideas are for. If ideas must be compared with anything, they say, compare them with tools. Imagine a cave man unable to subdue a mastodon with his spear because the mastodon can outrun him. The breakthrough comes when, after observing his quarry, he theorizes that the mastodon heads for the waterhole each sunset along the same path. Our hero hides along the path with his confederates (thoughts are social, to be shared), and the story ends with a successful ambush. According to James, the cave man's bright idea is simply a better mastodon-catching tool than his spear, "true" insofar as it effectively transforms an "I'm hungry" episode into a "Yummy, mastodon steak" episode. This is the thrust of James's aphorism, "The true is only the expedient in the way of thinking."

The "will to believe" is a minor amendment to this story. As Ayer and Barzun explain, only when an issue is unavoidable and there is no evidence pro or con does James recommend that we believe what we wish. Since we *must* believe something about God and immortality, we may as well believe what suits our spiritual aspirations. James, who coined the term "tough-minded," did not admire wishful thinking in everyday life.

The distinction between "the knower and the known" is not the only duality to fall. Pragmatism rejects as well the barrier between an "inner" mind and its outward manifestation in behavior. We normally deny thought to a guided missile because its gyrations are not the product of an immaterial mind or soul. It changes directions "only" when the radar image of its target misses the crosshairs of its sight. But surely, replies the pragmatist, the radar image in the missile's innards is a proto-belief about where its target lies, for the image controls the missile's behavior in the way your beliefs control yours. The missile, a flatworm avoiding light, a baseball fan striding toward the bleachers: instead of trying to distinguish "mere mechanism" from "purposeful action," the pragmatist sees a continuum of guidance systems.

Smudged too is the conventional dichotomy between "fact" and "value," between cognition and decision. As all ideas carry implications for action, all must be judged by the consequences of acting on them. "Moral principles" are simply ideas contrived with special explicitness for yielding satisfactory lives for individual and community. If they fail in this they are rejected, just as scientific ideas are rejected when their predictions fail and they become unable to relieve puzzlement. "Fanaticism" and "irrationality" apply to the disregard of experiential tests of dogmas—or of policies.

YET even if the "will to believe" is deemphasized, pragmatism does permit a disturbingly free play in our opinions. It recognizes no fixed world to "compel submission from all right minds," as Barzun puts it. Even experience, which arrives already edited, exercises little external control. Barzun embraces the inevitability of "conflicting truths," but it is Rorty who shows how pragmatism can descend into obscurantism or worse. His steps along this path are quickened by irascibility toward academic philosophy, and his chief companions—Jacques Derrida and Martin Heidegger—seem to have been chosen for the unintelligibility of their writing.

Of the many escape-routes from reality, Rorty chooses flight into language. Since there is no reality to talk about, talk itself—or, more generally, "the text"—remains the sole topic of human thought. "One cannot see language-as-a-whole in

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relation to something else to which it applies... language is not a device for representing reality, but a reality in which we live and move." This is said to follow from James's rejection of a "privileged vocabulary." With that gone,

> we simply cast around for a vocabulary which lets us get what we want. . . . I think we shall best understand the role of textualism within our culture if we see it as an attempt to think through a thoroughgoing pragmatism, a thoroughgoing abandonment of the notion of *discovering the truth*....

According to Rorty, not only does "textualism" reduce philosophy to a "literary genre," all the while abjuring questions of what literature itself refers to, it renders even science "one genre of literature, . . . commentaries on the writings of earlier interpreters of Nature." Only once does Rorty so much as acknowledge the role of observation in science; mostly he prefers to take "the remarks of our fellow-inquirers" as the sole data in any intellectual endeavor. Rorty evades the autistic implications of his words by denying what he has said in the same breath in which he says it: " 'There is nothing outside the text' is right about what it implicitly denies and wrong about what it explicitly asserts." The reader who notices that what is denied is the existence of anything outside the text is left with little else.

Reasoning, the very idea that one party to a dispute may be right and the other wrong, naturally gets short shrift. Rorty congratulates Heidegger for not offering any arguments at all. Indeed, the end of classical philosophy—the attempt to reach important truths about man and the world by means of thought—cannot come too quickly for him. He anticipates a "postphilosophical culture" and warns against attempting to be "constructive and progressive." Derrida is cited to what is allegedly the same effect, on

> the systematic crossing-out of the *arché* and the transformation of general semiology into grammatology, the latter performing a critical work upon everything within semiology—right down to its matrical concept of signs—that retains any metaphysical presuppositions incompatible with the theme of differance [*sic*].

Says Rorty: "One can easily conclude from such passages as this that Derrida conceives of his work as purely negative." I for one cannot conclude anything very easily from such prose, but when Derrida denigrates "Western methods of analysis, explication, reading, or interpretation," and Rorty dismisses criticisms of his philosophical heroes as a failure to appreciate how profoundly they are debunking philosophy, I am reminded of orthodox Freudians and Marxists—the sort who diagnose disagreement as "resistance" or "false consciousness" and hence as further support for their pet doctrines.

In the end, Rorty's animadversions against philosophy amount to the usual griping about the "barrenness of academic philosophy" and its hack professionals with their "scholastic little definitions." We shall return to this accusation below—it suffices for now to recognize it as a thudding cliché in belletristic circles, insufferable from someone who cautions that his own work on Dewey and Heidegger "may seem a *tour de force*."

It is hard to understand Rorty's alienation from his profession: his previous book, *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* (1979), was enthusiastically received, and Anglo-American philosophers still study an essay he wrote on Wittgenstein over twenty years ago. Until recently he held a chair at Princeton (and now holds another at the University of Virginia, as well as a "genius" grant from the MacArthur Foundation). His judgment that the American Philosophical Association exists "to breathe life into dead issues" was delivered in his 1979 presidential address to that body. Presumably, Rorty's colleagues tolerate this ridicule because they think they deserve it. No longer trusting in the value of their work, they may not be the best but they certainly lack all conviction. The APA has recently summoned its energies to purge itself of "sexist language." American philosophers must think they have nothing better to do.

But pragmatists need not follow Rorty's plunge into darkness, which is the result of an elementary confusion. We may accept James's stress on the relativity to human interests of language and the distinctions it embodies (although it can be overstated: the taxonomic vocabulary of science cuts nature nicely at the joints). But once a system of categorizing the world is adopted, the judgments made by means of it are no longer relative to their human origin. They stand by themselves, to be true or false. For instance, I can use whatever conventions I please for mapping the earth's surface, but once I do so, the location of geographical features within my plan breaks free of my subjectivity and becomes completely objective. If I call one area "Europe," another area "the Atlantic Ocean," and a third "Staten Island," that is up to me—but it is not up to me whether, as I have defined them, the Atlantic Ocean separates Staten Island from Europe. We obviously cannot talk about the earth's surface or anything else without language, and language is obviously a human contrivance, but this hardly makes reality an undifferentiated blob of dough, given character only by human cookie-cutters. Europe and Staten Island are separated by water not because of Truth or Reality or Kantianism or the rest of the upper-case baggage Rorty and Barzun keep dragging in, but because of Europe, Staten Island, and all that water. This is reality enough for plain man or philosopher. We might

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say that Rorty and Barzun have made the mistake of supposing that the inventor of maps also invented territory itself.

Unfortunately, however, this way of saving pragmatism from relativism diminishes its appeal, at least as a distinctive philosophy of knowledge, for the absolute opposition between classical truth and pragmatic instrumentalism has now collapsed. The cave man's hypothesis about the habits of his prey turns out to be *both* a device for organizing an unruly world and objectively true or false. If the mastodon does not show up as planned, the cave man's belief is wrong (as well as useless). In fact, scientists take accurate prediction as the final confirmation of a theory, so that, for them, the pragmatist's "working in practice" is just another way of saying "corroborated by experiment." It is indeed far from clear what difference pragmatists can find between the two phrases. All that finally separates pragmatism from realism is a form of words. If it still seems important to choose—because how we talk is important—one might note the realist's insistence on the limits of the human will and his provision of a world for science to aim at. I prefer the realist's way of talking.

THE FOREGOING is intended not only to pierce the nihilistic gloom, but to illustrate as well the value of plain old reasoning and distinction-making, however shallow and ahistoricist and non-Heideggerian. It is precisely because sobriety so easily falls out of fashion that A.J. Ayer's book is most welcome. Ayer has been laboring in the philosophical vineyards for almost half a century now, pruning muddle and tending an outgrowth of pragmatism called Logical Positivism. Like pragmatists and other empiricists, Ayer believes that experience is the basis of knowledge, but he prefers methodical piecework to visions, detailed cogent argument to manifestoes. The relentlessness and compression of his style may discourage some readers, but it is good to have a thinker who does not lose the trees for the forest.

Ayer's principal objection to pragmatism is typically "analytic." By construing the "cash value" of a belief as the experiences it leads us to expect, pragmatism distorts beliefs about the minds of others and about the past. What do I anticipate if I suspect you are angry? Not being telepathic, I cannot hope to read your thoughts; instead, I brace myself to hear bad language and see you march out of the room. But these expectations all concern your behavior. In other words, claims Ayer, pragmatism must say that statements which appear to be about your thoughts are really about your body, and thus lapses into behaviorism. Similarly, since the "cash value" of my beliefs about ancient Carthage are predictions of what I will find in history books and archeological digs, pragmatism turns statements about what did happen into statements about what will happen. Ayer uses that latter difficulty to link pragmatism and phenomenology, which also sees the world as suffused by mind and is similarly unable to make sense of something happening before there were any people. It is important to add that the past, and especially other minds, are problems for most versions of empiricism.

It is this sort of unspectacular dissection of issues which infuriates critics of "analytic" philosophy and sets Barzun to muttering about "the Byzantine magnification of trifles." Like many before him, he warns of "scholasticism" and a "decline into futility." This animus is misdirected. Without one operatic gesture or overwrought trope, Ayer sheds more light on pragmatism and human knowledge than do volumes of pretentious continental double-talk about "the deconstruction of the episteme and logocentric metaphysics." If Ayer ignores news of philosophy's inanition, that is because he has something interesting for philosophy to do: study evidence. Philosophy, says Ayer, is the analysis of the relations of support among the various things we believe. The problem of other minds, for instance, really concerns the logical bearing of statements about behavior on statements about thought. This may sound silly by itself, but fragments of an enterprise as vast as philosophy are bound to seem silly and decadent, especially to anyone uneasy with subtlety and abstraction. (A single square inch from the Sistine Chapel would also look pretty unpromising, especially to someone who did not like art.) The pragmatist's notion of "cash value" is his own attempt to explain the ultimate warrant of ideas. Whether or not they would accept Ayer's formulation, pragmatists along with the other central figures of the Western philosophical tradition have been analyzing away for thousands of years.

YET pragmatism is more than just another episode in intellectual history. While not a metaphysical advance on commonsense realism, it does have something permanently valuable to say, and that is on the subject of ethics. Its ethical message has been misunderstood because the exhortation to look to consequences resembles the utilitarian ideal of doing whatever serves the greatest happiness of the greatest number. Barzun says they differ in that pragmatism has "nothing to do with legislating the good of society at large or the wishes of a majority. It is a concrete relation between persons." But this will hardly do.

Pragmatism is intended to be universal, to inform the deliberations of legislators as well as those of anyone else. As such, it appears vulnerable to the woes of any ethic of consequences. Taken literally, it requires the measurement and comparison of different persons' satisfactions; in the extreme, it would apparently urge a sheriff to surrender his prisoner to a lynch mob should the

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gain in public peace outweigh the damage to the prisoner and general respect for the law.

But the matter does not end here. For if consequentialism is inadequate, so too is unconditional obedience to moral rules, consequentialism's great rival. "Let justice be done though the heavens fall" leads to perplexities of its own. No rule is inviolable in the face of a sufficiently dire catastrophe; justice itself must sometimes be overridden. Murder is wrong, but who among us in 1943 would not have murdered Hitler if he could? Rigid adherence to rules is no more adequate to moral experience than utilitarianism. (To become a "situationist," to play up the difference between lying to your wife and lying to the Gestapo as the key to right living, is to treat a truism as the discovery of the century.)

Pragmatism, if understood not as a criterion but as advice, offers a way out of this labyrinth. It tells us: retain your principles but be open to consequences. Both components are essential to developed moral thought. Some acts, like perjury, are wrong, and rules forbidding them cannot be violated for some small net gain. It is anyway not possible to decide each case from scratch. We must conserve our energy for crisis and, as James said, "Habit is the enormous fly-wheel of society." But we abdicate our responsibility to think when we let principles make all our decisions for us. The many absurd regulations extruded by the federal bureaucracy illustrate the easy slide from pure principle ("equity" or "health") to unreason. Legislators and the educated class prompting them, two groups comfortably insulated from experience, are in urgent need of a dose of pragmatism.

Decisions are not truly tested, however, by empty gestures—like the ritual appending of an unread "economic impact study" to the most outlandish proposals. Pragmatism demands alertness. Even openness to consequences itself cannot be taken as a dogma, for the extent and nature of the openness must be weighed. Judges looking to the sociological impact rather than the legal bases of their decisions have done harm precisely because they are *too* open to consequences, and open in an inappropriate way. What consequences to count and how to count them are all matters for reflection.

Telling people to balance principle against consequence offers little in the way of concrete guidance. But a philosophical overview is supposed to offer insight, not marching orders. Anyone who wants more is really looking for a magic formula to dispel moral quandary. It is a hard truth, but existence will be morally perplexing as long as confusing, indeterminate situations demand action. Nor would human beings really prefer to trade moral anguish for calculations that could be done by automata. It is remarkable that pragmatism, long derided as distinctly shallow in an American way, should address the human condition with unique candor.

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How the PLO Terrorized Journalists in Beirut

Kenneth R. Timmerman

MUCH was made during the Israeli campaign in Lebanon this past summer of attempts by Israel to muzzle the international press. The French daily *Le Monde*, in an article entitled "War against the Press?," reported on July 8, 1982 that a photographer for the Sygma agency was held up for several hours at Tel Aviv airport, and that after interrogation his film was temporarily seized. As for the American public, the climax was perhaps reached when, at the end of June, CBS broadcast a 30-second segment completely whited out, bearing the stamp of the Israeli censor.

In order to get around Israeli military censorship, which they feared would delete their best footage, the American television networks chartered a high-speed yacht to make the trip from Junieh to Cyprus, carrying their video cassettes of the bombardments of West Beirut. By the end of the siege, ten television companies from several countries were sharing this service, since the direct-transmission station in the mountains surrounding Beirut had been knocked out at the very beginning of the war . . . by Syrian shells. The price demanded by the Athenian millionaire who owned the yacht was $80,000 per month.

By contrast with the allegedly restricted situation in Israel, correspondents in West Beirut constantly affirmed their freedom to report what they saw as they saw it, uninfluenced by the PLO which controlled that part of the city. Marc Kravetz, in the French daily *Le Matin* (August 2), attacked Israel for charging that he and other journalists were biased in their reports. "Throughout this war, the press was able to evaluate the difference between a country without censorship and its neighbor," Kravetz wrote. "Most journalists working from the Israeli lines were at least theoretically supposed to submit their dispatches to a regime of censorship which we could not even imagine existing in West Beirut."

Yet the idyll Kravetz paints is false. The risks journalists incurred while working in Beirut did not come solely or even mostly from Israeli bombs. As an independent journalist who spent three weeks in a PLO jail this past summer (July 14-August 6), I can testify that when it came to muzzling the press, the PLO had things worked out to a fine science.

THERE were two centers for the foreign press crews in Beirut, the Commodore Hotel in the West and the Alexander in the East. Most of the television coverage of the siege was filmed from the rooftops of one of these two hotels, both of which, despite an occasional shell, were the safest place to be while still within reasonable view of the fighting.*

Both hotels spent enormous sums to keep their telexes and international telephones in operation. Israeli soldiers often came to the bar of the Alexander for a drink, while the Palestinian Press Agency, WAFA, according to Kravetz's own description, would arrive at the Commodore the day after bombardments to show selected journalists "the damage caused by the enemy."

The information supplied by WAFA on the number of victims and their category—civilian or military—provided the basis for the dispatches leaving West Beirut, in the absence of other sources. The "Lebanese police" so often quoted in this context had ceased to function in West Beirut early in the siege. With deadlines to meet and under the risk of falling bombs, most journalists were content with what they got. This, then, was one source of the wild exaggeration in the figures of civilian dead reported throughout the war and especially during the siege of Beirut.

But this aspect of the story has been well documented, and is a staple of almost every military conflict. Much more important were the direct means employed by the PLO to control the journalists present in West Beirut, and the indirect means used to intimidate them.

First there was the press pass issued by WAFA with the bearer's photograph, a duplicate of which remained in WAFA's offices. Without this pass, no journalist could hope to circulate in West Beirut; caught photographing, or taking notes, he would be immediately arrested if not shot on sight.

No newspaper or other medium would commit the error of sending in to West Beirut someone who had adversely reported in the past on the activities of the PLO or the Syrians, for fear of his simply disappearing. Thus a first "selection" of journalists was made by the PLO: there simply were no unfriendly journalists operating in the besieged sector of the city. (Needless to say, no similar selection was made by the Israel Press Office. Western correspondents reporting from Tel Aviv freely criticized the Begin government's handling of the war.)

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* The Alexander received several direct artillery hits from Palestinian positions on July 12, and was damaged by a car bomb in early August, while the Commodore was hit by a single Israeli bomb on August 4, the day of the heaviest fighting of the entire siege.

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The list of journalists who over the years have been murdered, shot, kidnapped, imprisoned, or otherwise intimidated in Beirut for their "indiscretions" is a long one: ten deaths from 1976 to 1981 alone, not counting those of this past summer. The ten slain journalists include two ABC television correspondents, Larry Buchman and Sean Toolan; Edouard Saab, the editor of *Orient le Jour*, the largest French-language daily in the entire region; Salim Laouzi, editor of the periodical *Al Hawadess*; and Robert Pfeffer, from the West German magazine *Stern*.

Sean Toolan was shot dead in the street in July 1980, after having completed an ABC film on Palestinian terrorism.

Robert Pfeffer was shot dead in front of his Beirut apartment shortly after he published a book on the use of PLO terrorist-training bases in Lebanon by the Baader-Meinhof gang.

Edouard Saab had been critical of Palestinian military activities in Lebanon since 1970. In September 1976, as he was leaving Beirut, his car was stopped at an Al Fatah checkpoint where he was killed by a machine-gun burst in the forehead.

The horribly mutilated corpse of Salim Laouzi was found by a shepherd near the village of Aramoun, on the outskirts of Beirut, on March 4, 1980. Threats against his life began in 1975. That summer a bombing totally destroyed the Beirut headquarters of his weekly magazine *Al Hawadess*, forcing him to move editorial offices to London, where Laouzi (a Lebanese Muslim) continued to fight against Palestinian and Syrian occupation of his country. On a return trip to Beirut to see his family, his car was stopped at a Syrian army roadblock, and Laouzi was abducted by militiamen from the pro-Syrian Saiqa group of the PLO. His body was not discovered until ten days after his disappearance.

In June 1980, Bernard Debussman, Beirut bureau chief for Reuters, was shot in the back with a pistol equipped with a silencer, upon leaving the home of a colleague in Beirut. He had been repeatedly threatened by the pro-Syrian faction of the PLO for his articles on events inside Syria. The other Western newsmen who witnessed the shooting were hastily withdrawn from their posts. Debussman, after a long stay in the hospital, survived.

Peter Meyer-Ranke, Middle East correspondent for the Springer newspaper chain in West Germany, wrote in February 1982 that "Beirut is no place for an honest journalist to work." Referring to coverage of the heavy fighting between Syrian troops and Phalangists in 1978, Meyer-Ranke said that he had frequently observed "self-censorship, self-restrictions, and silence" from his Western colleagues in Palestinian and Syrian-controlled areas. "More important for them is the press card from the PLO and the Syrian government."

THINGS got no better during the siege of Beirut this past summer. For journalists West Beirut was the place to be. But to be in West Beirut, they had to play by the rules of the PLO.

Thus did the PLO campaign of intimidation and direct elimination over the past six years pay off. No one needed to be reminded of it. Nor would anyone try to "infiltrate" West Beirut unbeknownst to the PLO: armed Palestinian and Syrian guardposts covered every street, and Europeans stuck out like sore thumbs. It was impossible to circulate incognito. If you wanted to cover West Beirut, the press pass was a must.

There were other means of PLO control. For the journalist who was truly recalcitrant, foolhardy, or curious, there was the PLO prison system. Each of the 15 organizations comprising the Palestine Liberation Organization had its own prison in West Beirut. The primary aim of these prisons was to keep the Lebanese and other Arab inhabitants from fleeing the city during the siege; most of the inmates had been arrested at various PLO checkpoints on their way out. The "Arab telephone" communicated the news of this practice to all the inhabitants of the city, who, as a result, mostly remained behind as hostages and propaganda decoys, preferring the risk of Israeli bombardment to the certain terror of the PLO prisons.

The Western press corps failed completely to report on the existence of the prisons, despite the fact that many journalists were aware of them. When I was released after being held underground for 24 days during the bombings, I approached a well-known wire service with news of the prisons. I was coldly received, and dismissed with the assurance that they would report nothing. They still had people in West Beirut, and could not put them in jeopardy.

This is exactly what it means to say that the PLO is a terrorist organization. The efficient terrorist strikes in such a way as to make his potential victims feel vulnerable on every front, at every moment. That is his equivalent of the "deterrent" so often evoked in discussions of nuclear war, and it operated very effectively in the case of the news service I tried to interest in the story of the PLO prisons.

ON July 30, during my imprisonment, I met two American journalists who were terrorized in this sense. This was in the subcellars of a modern building in Fakhani, one of the military headquarters of the PLO and thus a prime Israeli target. They were a couple, brought down to the shelter during a bombardment. Bit by bit they realized that off in the dark around them were not "conveniences" for soldiers wishing to recoup their energies during the raids but cells to hold Arab and Western prisoners, including myself. The couple broke down. "When we get back to the States we'll tell everyone how brave you are," said the girl to her "guardians." "We'll tell them how well you treated us."

The two never published a word on their brief and unwitting tour of the PLO prisons; it is extremely doubtful they will ever do so. Terror is not knowing when you will be struck down. As such it has been the most successful weapon of the PLO in its campaign to influence the Western news media.

A journalist who has actually been arrested or threatened by the PLO for some "indiscretion" becomes subject to the tacit understanding on the part of all concerned that such incidents will be

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covered up for fear of further reprisals against associates and parent organizations. One American journalist I talked to denied reports that he had received Syrian threats, despite the fact that these had been confirmed by other sources. The journalist in question has since been relieved of duty on Middle Eastern affairs and been given an assignment elsewhere. This has happened time and time again, as it did with those who witnessed the gunning of Bernard Debussman.

The New York *Times*, the Washington *Post*, the Associated Press, *Newsweek*, and others have been cited by Israeli authorities as having deliberately covered up incidents of arrest, mistreatment, and overt threats against their correspondents in Beirut at the hands of the PLO. According to the Jerusalem *Post*, "a condition for their release was that their media not mention their abduction."

Several French newsmen were held captive by the PLO during the siege of Beirut for periods ranging from six to twenty-four hours. Their film was examined, they were personally threatened and in several cases beaten and physically intimidated to insure their silence. In my own case, French consular authorities arranged a trade for my release. Since returning to France I have learned from sources in contact with the PLO that I have been written off as one who will never speak. During my 3½ weeks of constant, direct intimidation, I was supposed to have "learned."

Terror, intimidation, and the law of silence: these are the basic tools used by the Palestine Liberation Organization to manipulate the international press. Most of the sins committed by Western newsmen under PLO constraint were sins of omission: showing bombed buildings but not the arms stockpiled in their basements; describing bombed hospitals but not the PLO fighters whose bases of operations were inside; and so forth. The list is infinite, but the effect unmistakable: the reversal of international opinion on the moral equation of the Middle East conflict.

Anti-Nuclear Fantasies

Patrick Glynn

THE anti-nuclear movement has typically expressed itself in broad, emotional gestures of public protest—marches and rallies, theatrical demonstrations of the horrible effects of nuclear bombs, popular referenda for some sort of "freeze" on the arms race. But along with this popular protest, a specialized literature has been forming—a growing corpus of "anti-nuclear books" that attempt to provide more specific theoretical underpinnings for the movement. The best known of these books is Jonathan Schell's *The Fate of the Earth*. Two major new additions to the genre are *Indefensible Weapons* and *Beyond the Cold War*—the former a collaborative effort by two activist American professors, Robert Jay Lifton and Richard Falk, the latter a collection of polemical essays by E.P. Thompson, the well-known British Marxist historian and spokesman for the European disarmament campaign.*

In *Indefensible Weapons*, Robert Jay Lifton and Richard Falk direct our attention to a phenomenon called "nuclearism," which they define as the "psychological, political, and military dependence on nuclear weapons, the embrace of the weapons as a solution to a wide variety of human dilemmas, most ironically that of 'security.'" At different points in the text, nuclearism is characterized as a "disease," a fundamentalist "religion," and an "addiction."

The book consists of two long essays, one by each author, with a jointly written introduction and conclusion. In the first essay, called "Imagining the Real," Lifton, who teaches psychiatry at Yale, argues that the sheer presence of nuclear arms and the dangers they pose are responsible for a wide variety of psychic ills in modern societies; that governments have tended to cope with the nuclear peril by taking refuge in the neurotic "illusion" that stockpiling the weapons can provide security; and that the cure for our problem lies in rejecting such illusions—in "casting off our

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* *Indefensible Weapons: The Political and Psychological Case Against Nuclearism*, by Robert Jay Lifton and Richard Falk, Basic Books, 301 pp., $15.50. *Beyond the Cold War: A New Approach to the Arms Race and Nuclear Annihilation*, by E.P. Thompson, Pantheon, 198 pp., $15.00.

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obeisance to the bomb," through "awareness" and "action" directed toward disarmament. In the second essay, "Political Anatomy of Nuclearism," Falk, a professor of international law at Princeton, offers an account of the arms race since the close of World War II. He blames the growth of nuclear armaments chiefly on an entrenched "power structure" in the United States, which he claims has promoted the expansion of nuclear arsenals for profit and personal gain. While acknowledging the existence of similar "militarists" in the Soviet Union, he tends to attribute the vast growth in nuclear forces chiefly to a series of unilateral decisions by the United States—most notably, the decision to go forward with the H-bomb—to which the Soviet Union has responded.

Beyond the Cold War has a different focus, reflecting its European origins, but it sounds similar themes. E.P. Thompson's word for "nuclearism" is "exterminism," which he describes as an "addiction" to the arms race. Both the United States and the Soviet Union suffer from this addiction, according to Thompson; indeed, they reinforce it in one another. In this book Thompson tends to view the two superpowers as perfectly reciprocal, as a pair of mirror images. In both nations, defense is the "leading sector" of the economy, and the arms race is mainly designed to keep existing elites in power.

Thompson's announced goal is different from Lifton's and Falk's, or at least more geographically specific. While they hope for total disarmament, Thompson speaks of a "nuclear-free" and "nonaligned" Europe, in which Eastern and Western Europe will somehow be rejoined and liberated from what he calls the "clientage" that they experience at the hands, respectively, of the Soviet Union and the United States. He also intimates that this new Europe will bring with it a new political order, combining the virtues of both the Western and the Communist systems.

LIKE the anti-nuclear movement as a whole, these books begin by directing attention to the unprecedentedly destructive nature of nuclear weapons themselves. But this is not their ultimate focus of concern. For at the heart of the radical anti-nuclear argument is not so much a revulsion against nuclear arms as a moral rejection of Western-style democracies, especially that of the United States, and even a rejection of politics as traditionally understood. It quickly becomes clear that the case against "nuclearism" rests less on an indictment of the weapons than on an indictment of the West.

Falk puts this vividly in his description of the United States at the end of World War II:

> The Hiroshima context informs us that it does not take much, at least in the setting of general war, to prepare Americans, and one suspects other similar states with pretensions of geopolitical "greatness," to inflict atrocities on enemy societies in order to make a point. In a sense, at least for the West, such a capacity has a hallowed heritage. The Old Testament God seemed always ready to plunder an enemy people unto the last woman and child for the sake of His chosen people. In other words, moral arrangements for atrocity and genocide have long enjoyed a high cultural stature and are presumably imprinted on our civilization in a manner that is so deep it is hidden from active consciousness.

In short, in Falk's vision it is not so much the weapons themselves that are "indefensible" as the institutional arrangements of Western political life.

While characterizing Western political institutions at the end of World War II as "moral arrangements for atrocity and genocide," Falk decribes the Soviet Union in the same period as "an extreme instance of a powerful state with a self-help orientation." This curiously abstract formulation is based on—to put it mildly—an interesting conception of "self-help." For if Americans have been willing, in most of the postwar era, to sustain the build-up of our nuclear arsenal, it is because they have understood the abhorrent nature of the Soviet regime. Nor has there been a shortage of evidence to support this understanding. During the same postwar years in which the United States was aiding the economic recovery of Western Europe and planting democracy in Germany and Japan, the Soviet Union was closing its grip ever more tightly on the nations of the Eastern bloc—a grip which even today the massed protest of the Polish populace seems incapable of loosing. By 1946, the year to which Falk is referring in this passage, some 30 million Soviet citizens had died at the hands of their own government, consigned to the Gulags and to the torture chambers of the secret police.

Under the circumstances, Falk's resort to euphemism is instructive. In light of his professed concern about atrocity and genocide, it is remarkable how far a non-Western government actually needs to go in the direction of exterminating its own citizens and brutally subjugating its neighbors before it earns, at last, his reluctant disapproval.

IT WOULD be tempting to dismiss this perspective on politics as transparently Marxist and pro-Soviet, and indeed, in no small measure, it is both. Neither Falk nor Thompson seems quite capable of passing up an opportunity to disparage the United States or to frame an excuse for the Soviet Union. But it is important to recognize that this habit stems less from a genuine sympathy for the Kremlin than from a deep antipathy to the American political order—an antipathy that, in the outlook of many anti-nuclear activists, chiefly amounts to a rejection of political arrangements as a whole. This feeling about politics goes far toward explaining the curious and troubling resonance that such radical insights seem to find in the general culture nowadays. In a happier, more sensible age, writers like Lifton, Falk, and Thompson would be dismissed by the vast majority of educated people as irresponsible extremists bent simply on our undoing, but in the present cultural context they have come to speak a language that is inwardly echoed and instinctively understood by a large portion of the educated middle class. The anti-nuclear movement appeals deeply to a widely shared alienation from traditional political life.

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Indeed, to read the literature of the anti-nuclear movement is to be struck by the degree to which, in its self-understanding, it is an "anti-political" political movement—a protest not primarily against weapons or even war but against political life as such. This anti-political vision, moreover, appears to have taken hold with equal force on both sides of the Atlantic. It is as evident in Germany's Green party as in America's ecological and anti-nuclear Left. As Thompson puts it, reflecting on the greening of his own basically orthodox Marxism: "I am, as I get older, more and more anti-statist: I do not trust state power."

In short, the anti-nuclear movement is driven forward not by orthodox Marxism but by a viewpoint that in its most concrete form imagines a world somehow freed of government and the power of elites, in which something that Falk terms "the Machiavellian world picture" is replaced by something called "the holistic world picture." The tyranny of what is darkly termed "bureaucratic oversight" disappears from human affairs, and a new age dawns. In this new world, humane feeling overcomes or at least bypasses politics. E. P. Thompson speaks of "profound, worldwide changes in public consciousness" that will produce "a détente of peoples rather than states." In Falk's words, nuclear disarmament when it comes will be simply "the most dramatic dimension" of a mysterious and sweeping change in consciousness, which will bring "a new leadership" supported by "appropriate mass beliefs and values" and by "a new network of institutional arrangements, that is, in short, by a new world order" that will enable us to experience "the interrelatedness of life on this planet."

IF THE outlines of the new order never appear more sharply than this, it is because the vision takes its origins less in attraction toward the new order than in revulsion from the existing one. But precisely because the movement's goal is a rejection of all politics, it is incapable of making essential political distinctions. Nowhere does this become clearer than in the movement's portrayal of the Soviet Union.

It is not that Falk flatters tyrants or applauds tyranny. He does not, for example, go as far as E. P. Thompson, who refers to subjugated Eastern Europe as "a protective belt of client states" around besieged Mother Russia, and who calls the invasion of Afghanistan "aggressive defense." Falk insists that the anti-nuclear movement must "premise" its "concern" with "an acknowledgment that Soviet society and bureaucratic socialism more generally present us with an unpleasant version of collective life, something to be avoided for ourselves." But the language he chooses is once again revealing. For surely something more than "unpleasantness" is at stake here.

And yet it appears to be the very "unpleasantness" of Soviet "collective life"—the psychological discomfort accompanying it—that forms the basis of any reservations Falk may have. This curious perspective is reflected everywhere in the language of *Indefensible Weapons*. Thus Falk speaks of the tendency during the cold war to portray the Soviet Union as "an inhuman political system that tormented its citizenry with cruelties and bureaucratic tedium." This is to use the word "tormented" in two very different senses. Bureaucratic tedium is one thing, arbitrary imprisonment and torture at the hands of the authorities is quite another; yet this professor of international law shows a disconcerting propensity to treat the two as though they were merely different aspects of a single problem. Falk writes elsewhere in the book of the "cruelty and grinding inefficiency" of the Soviet state. No one likes government inefficiency; yet to speak in the same breath of the inefficiency of a government and its willingness to torture its own citizens is to confess blindness to the most rudimentary practical and political distinctions. It is to give equal weight to literal and to figurative "oppression," to set horrible physical suffering and deprivation of rights on a par with minor states of psychological discomfort.

This is precisely what Lifton and Falk have a habit of doing. In characterizing the impact of nuclear weapons on ordinary life, Lifton stresses the importance of what he calls "images of extinction": "Here I would include Nazi genocide during World War II; various nuclear accidents involving weapons (the coming apart of a bomb in Arkansas in 1980) or energy (Three Mile Island, in 1979). . . ." Now Three Mile Island was indeed an unhappy episode. But there is something radically questionable about a perspective in which Nazi genocide and Three Mile Island (where no one was killed or even seriously injured) count equally as "images of extinction."

AT THE root of these confusions is a myopic, even solipsistic approach to evaluating political realities, whereby events gain in importance simply by virtue of occurring nearby. So preoccupied do Lifton and Falk seem with their own bitter sense of alienation from American political life that all other political ills are totally eclipsed. In this vision, America is so evil that it is hard to imagine anything worse. Falk even goes so far as to claim that American citizens are in effect more subject to government deception than inhabitants of totalitarian regimes:

> One of the high costs of modern nationalism is a decline in the willingness, perhaps the capacity, of leaders, especially of powerful countries, to speak the truth to their citizens.
>
> This deterioration of public discourse is especially dangerous where citizens generally trust the government. In Soviet society citizens know how to read the morning edition of *Pravda*. They often get hints from what is not said or about how official policy is celebrated, but they have few illusions about the completeness or reliability of what they are told. We in a democratic society are less on guard, partly of course because we enjoy the benefits of freedom and because the media nurture our trust in their independence and objectivity.

By an Orwellian logic, a free press is thus shown to make the truth *less* accessible to the public than the state-controlled media of totalitarian states. Behind this twisted reasoning is the assumption that the Soviet Union differs from the United States not in kind but simply in de-

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gree. It is not that state power in the Soviet Union is more malignant; it is that its malignance is more obvious.

Oddly enough, even after acknowledging that the Soviet leadership engages in systematic deceit, Lifton and Falk show a remarkable willingness to accept the statements of Soviet rulers precisely at face value. At the very same time that they applaud Soviet citizens for taking a jaded view of Soviet government statements, they disparage American leaders for doing the same: "In this regard we take positive note of the significant pledge never to use nuclear weapons first that Leonid Brezhnev made on behalf of the Soviet Union in his June 15, 1982 message to the United Nations, and we are disturbed by our government's dismissal of the proposal without offering any constructive response of its own." One can only speculate what such a "constructive" response might be.

In short, the treatment of the Soviet Union in *Indefensible Weapons* is never the least bit honest and evenhanded, and, as Orwell might have predicted, the book's use of language constantly betrays it. Thus we are told that "Gulag revelations of the extensiveness of Stalinist death camps, post-Stalinist repression of dissidents, and periodic Soviet interventions in Eastern Europe to destroy the strivings of the people by way of restoring stability to Communist rule [have] *lent credibility to the claim* that our rival embodies evil in the primary sense" (emphasis added)—as though such accusations were not entirely "credible." Similarly, it is asserted that "American foreign policy has been *supposedly* organized around [the] central tenet of defensiveness," and that during the period of détente the United States "*allegedly* slowed its pace of arms racing" (emphasis added). Unable to contradict these facts openly, Falk does his best to discredit them. But there is a notable reluctance to get beyond the "allegedlys" and "supposedlys" to the actual realities of the situation.

Lifton notes that the concept of limited war has persisted "among some American and *presumably* Soviet strategists" (emphasis added). But there are dozens of volumes that could be consulted to determine whether this presumption is true. The frightening reality is that from the earliest days of the nuclear age, Soviet strategists have taken seriously many different scenarios of limited nuclear war, always presuming such war to be winnable, whatever its size. Yet such considerations have little allure for the likes of Lifton and Falk, whose interest lies not in grasping the truth of our situation but rather in disseminating anti-nuclear dogma. Thus, we are assured, nothing short of total war is possible; it is an "illusion" that deterrence can prevent it; all preparation for this horrible eventuality is "social madness"; suspicion of the Soviet Union is basically neurotic; nothing can save us short of the coming "holistic world picture." "[O]n the American side," Falk predicts, there will be a "powerful grass-roots movement outside the framework of politics" pressing for disarmament, while "on the Soviet side the challenge will have to be mounted by a faction of the Politburo and then win wider support throughout the common structure of the topheavy Soviet bureaucracy." Such is the movement's brilliant formula for peace: disarm, sit back, and wait for the Age of Aquarius to dawn in the Politburo.

Because it springs not from particular observations but rather from an overall attitude toward politics, this anti-nuclear view is effectively insulated from argument. No number of facts marshaled in defense of Western security policy could make any difference to partisans like Lifton, Falk, or Thompson. It is the self-sealing logic of anti-nuclear thinking that helps to explain the tendentious reading that the activists give to the American political order. Falk speaks, incongruously, about "fighting to regain democracy" in America, as though at some point in the recent past the whole nation somehow slipped unawares into totalitarian rule. Thompson offers a wilder fantasy. "At a certain point," he warns us, "the ruling groups come to *need* perpetual war crises, to legitimate their rule, their privileges, and their priorities; to silence dissent; to exercise social discipline; and to divert attention from the manifest irrationality of the operation." In light of the inexhaustible profusion of dissent and paucity of social discipline in modern American life, it is amazing just how poor a job our leaders have been doing.

It is important to realize the degree to which these protests focus less on objective political arrangements than on subjective psychological states—the degree to which "oppression" in such writing is merely a metaphor for "alienation." Indeed, the preoccupation of the anti-nuclear movement as a whole is overwhelmingly psychological, carrying to ludicrous lengths what Henry Kissinger has called the liberal propensity to treat foreign policy as "a subdivision of psychiatry." Both *Indefensible Weapons* and *Beyond the Cold War* tend to address the problem posed by nuclear weapons as though it were primarily or even exclusively a psychological predicament, a simple matter of altering one's state of mind.

This is reflected in Lifton's lengthy disquisition on the psychological ills or "spiritual corrosion" that result in all of us from the mere existence of nuclear weapons. By the time one has completed Lifton's essay, it is hard to imagine a psychological problem that does *not* proceed from our nuclear anxieties. Increasing divorce rates, greater incidence of premarital sex, expanded extramarital relationships, deteriorating relations between parents and children, nihilism in modern art, the growth of the hippie movement, the rise of the Moral Majority—by hook or by crook, Lifton manages to relate them all back to our worry about the Bomb.

To point to the absurdity of this train of reasoning is not to deny that nuclear weapons have darkened the human horizon, just as plague and barbarism darkened the horizon of previous ages. But even if all that Lifton asserts were true, one might still wonder whether psychic discomfort is not a small price to pay, in the long run, for the practical deterrence of nuclear war. For all the anxieties nuclear weapons may have caused us, we have, through prudential political

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and military measures, thus far prevented the outbreak of thermonuclear war. Lifton shifts all too easily between literal statement and metaphor when speaking about nuclear arms: "Spiritually they destroy and kill, even without being used." While this may be true in a sense, it is useful to keep in mind the distinction between "spiritual" and literal killing.

To a remarkable degree the anti-nuclear movement is understood by its intellectual leaders as an effort to exorcise anxiety and in the process to attain a kind of personal authenticity. "If we address these problems seriously," Lifton writes, "with reasoned thought and appropriate passion, we find ourselves recovering certain qualities that we had very nearly lost. . . . We become more genuine professionals, more genuine working people attuned to the central dilemma of our time." To strive for authenticity is well enough; but Lifton seems to ignore the fact that becoming "attuned" to a dilemma can be a very different thing from soberly and practically coping with it. Indeed, nothing could have graver consequences for Western political life than for such an intractable and delicate political predicament to become implicated in the middle-class quest for "authentic" mental states.

Because the problem of nuclear weapons is viewed as simply psychological, the solution to "nuclearism" is to be found, as though by magic, in new patterns of thought. As Lifton confidently assures us, "[T]he weapons are a product of human imagination, and human imagination is capable of getting rid of them." Or in Thompson's jaunty prose: "Since the weapons are useless, and function only as symbols, we could commence to behave as though they do not exist." So, following this advice, we should simply imagine our way out of our predicament. Indeed, as Falk explains, ridding the world of nuclear weapons is simply a matter of shedding one way of looking at the universe—one form of consciousness—for another, more advanced version. Behind all this lies an enormous confidence in the power of the counterculture, or what is left of it, to lift us above the sublunary imperfections of political life and usher in the golden age. Thompson writes:

> There is a shift at a level below politics—expressed in style, in sound, in symbol, in dress—which could be more significant than any negotiations now taking place in Geneva. The PA systems of these popular music bands are already capable of making transcontinental sounds. The bands may not be expert arms negotiators; but they might blast the youth of Europe into each others' arms.

These are putatively serious men; but they come very close to telling us that the deepest political dilemma of our time will be solved by rock and roll.

Fiction

John Updike: Promises, Promises

Joseph Epstein

In her memoir, *A Backward Glance*, Edith Wharton speaks of the advantages of not being considered promising. It was better, she thought, at least in her own case, "to fight my way to expression through a thick fog of indifference." Fighting his way through "a thick fog of indifference" has not quite been John Updike's problem in his career as a novelist. From his earliest novels Updike has had powerhouse critics behind him, among them Mary McCarthy, Arthur Mizener, Stanley Edgar Hyman, lauding him, cheering him on, acclaiming his promise.

Edith Wharton also speaks in her memoir of the disadvantages of being regarded as too promising, saying of those so considered that in middle age they often "sat in ineffectual ecstasy before the blank page or the empty canvas." This, as we know, has scarcely been John Updike's problem either, for now, twenty-four years after the publication of his first novel, *The Poorhouse Fair*, he has published fully twenty-five more books. Yet in a curious way, just as John Updike remains boyish in personal appearance and manner, his reputation has remained oddly boyish, too; now at fifty years old he still seems to be considered promising.

There are two jokes about John Updike. One is that he is an underacheever. The other is that he is an

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overacheever. The confusion between Updike and John Cheever stems of course from the fact that both have been writers long associated with the *New Yorker* and both have written extensively about suburban upper-middle-class life. But the confusion cannot be real to anyone who has read the two of them. Updike, for one thing, has taken up many subjects aside from the suburban one; for another, he has been by far the more productive writer; and for a third, he has been the more determinedly literary, in the sense of having read widely in the work of his contemporaries and taken a serious interest in the more sheerly aesthetic aspects of prose fiction. If ambition, productivity, and absorption in the ideas of one's day are to be counted, then John Updike is an overacheever.

But if we are to judge by greatness of theme, or seriousness of purpose, or largeness of spirit, is John Updike still an overacheever, or is he an underacheever or perhaps something else altogether? I fell away from John Updike's fiction with *Rabbit Redux* (1971), the second of what is now a trilogy of novels about the character Harry Angstrom. Until then Updike was a novelist I had read without particularly esteeming. He was—and remains—so obviously, so ardently, so determinedly a stylist. He was also so clearly the coming man, so full of a promise that never quite seemed to come to fulfillment. *Rabbit Run*, for example, the first of the three Harry Angstrom books, was a novel with an interesting idea at its center, that of a young man whose greatest glory (as a high-school athlete) is behind him at eighteen, yet the book grew diffuse, chaotic, and finally failed in a wash of violence at its close. *The Centaur*, Updike's attempt to stretch a contemporary novel upon a classical myth, *à la* James Joyce, seemed to me misfired, a bad idea taken all the way out. *Of the Farm*, a novel about a young man torn between the rivalrous claims of his wife and mother, was interesting but small. Between these novels Updike turned out an impressive flow of short stories, literary criticism, light verse. He became a large-public writer, in Wyndham Lewis's phrase, with the publication of *Couples*, a novel about sexual customs in the suburbs. As I recall, I did not quite finish reading *Couples*. It wasn't the sex that put me off—it was the conversation afterward.

Except for a hundred or so pages of *Rabbit Redux*, which I put down as improbable in its violence, I pretty much stopped reading the novels of John Updike. Promises, promises, of Updikean promises I had had, for the present, enough. Still, quite without my readership, John Updike's reputation continued to grow. When *Rabbit Is Rich* (1981) won the American Book Award, the National Book Critics Circle prize, and the Pulitzer Prize, the last named, in its citation, praised the novel as "a fulfillment of Updike's fabulous promise." *Time* put Updike on the cover of its issue of October 18, 1982, and inside ran a story about him entitled "Perennial Promises Kept." Had I decamped too soon?

"Updike," *Time* noted, "is ubiquitous." And so of late he has seemed. His books fill the mass paperback racks. A new book, *Bech Is Back*,* is out, in which the hero, a Jewish writer named Henry Bech, has finally written his "long-awaited" novel. No one has ever had to wait very long for a John Updike novel. Yet it is a bit unclear if anyone, apart from his publishers, is waiting at all. Perhaps it is owing to his high, his almost excessive, productivity which eliminates the pleasure of awaiting a fresh Updike work, but I do not get the sense that people love John Updike's work or that they bring certain hopeful expectations to it, as readers still do to the novels of, say, Saul Bellow or V. S. Naipaul—some hope that they will come away with fresh knowledge of the world or insight into themselves. Even John Updike seems to be a bit bored by the phenomenon of John Updike. "In novel after novel," he recently told a New York *Times* reporter, "the amorous get together, there's the romantic failure, the economic struggle—God, we've all done it so many times."

BORED Updike may have grown, but fatigued never. Since I ceased to read him he had, it seems, written five novels—not to mention books of stories. I decided to pick him up with a novel of 1976 entitled *Marry Me*. This is a book in which Updike takes up his old suburban subject, which I understand to be yearning among the upper-middle class. In *Marry Me*, Jerry Conant, a commercial artist and a married man with three young children, has an affair with and struggles over the question of whether to marry a woman, also married with three young children, who is part of his and his wife's social circle. Such drama as the novel has is about his waverings, his tugs of conscience. Much domestic detail is presented: many bedsheets are rumpled, a good deal of bread is toasted and buttered.

So is a good deal of the prose toasted and buttered. The hero of *Marry Me* cannot even urinate without Updike describing "his diminishing arc of relief." Updike simply cannot pass up any opportunity to tap dance in prose. Toward the novel's close, as it shambles to its denouement, one must still clamber over—as an adoring reviewer put it in the Boston *Globe*—"the famous style." Thus, debarking from a plane in France, the novel's hero Updikistically notes: "The air was soft, clean, and somehow fractionated, Cubistically portioned and dislocated by the diagonal rays of a tepid sun." In Updike there is always time to type out a bit of tapestry.

Style is worth dwelling on a moment longer, for John Updike is perhaps above all considered a stylist, the *primo don* of contemporary American prose. "I notice as I write," he has said, "it comes out as sort of Updike prose. . . . It's always mine, and there's no way I can seem to get around it. Isn't it funny you only have one voice?" With that style Updike can make elaborate metaphors, strike resounding rhythms—"Skating, Ruth flew and, flying, she was free"—and chisel small but interesting observations, such as this upon a minor character in *Marry Me*: "His anxious face had forgotten the attempted suavity of its blurry little mustache."

Can one write too well? I shouldn't have thought so, and yet

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style, understood as sheer prettiness of phrasing, can cover up the absence of having anything very pressing to say—or even anything to say at all. With Updike it appears to be the case that the less he has to say the more he turns on the style—charm being intended to substitute for substance. Unfortunately, it is usually not an adequate substitute.

Finally nothing more improves style than actually having something to say, but in *Marry Me* it is far from clear that Updike has anything at all to say. Jerry Conant, the hero, is a great ditherer, but then, in working out this novel's plot, so is its author. "Plot has always been a great worry to me," Updike told an audience at Skidmore College, "because I don't think that life falls into plots, it does not end quite the way books do." Maybe, and maybe not. But then neither does life fall into such old-style ladies'-magazine dialogue (" 'But love must become fruitful, or it loses itself,' "), such sententious observations ("Ruth disliked, religiously, the satisfaction he took in being divided, confirming thereby the split between body and soul that alone can save men from extinction"), such hilariously unintentional comic lines (" 'I'm a Judaeo-Christian, just like you are,' Ruth said") as this extraordinarily flat novel provides. Of moral conflict there is none, of interesting characters there are none, of acute observations there are none. There is only prose, working on nothing, exhibiting itself, as if to say: "Look Ma, no thoughts."

WHY would a novelist write such a book? Perhaps because he had had an experience—Updike some years ago did go through a divorce—and felt, as contemporary novelists tend to do, that no experience, God forfend, should be wasted. This same explanation might do for John Updike's next novel, *The Coup* (1978). Updike was a Fulbright Fellow in Africa, and it must have seemed a shame to him not to attempt to turn the experience into literature. *The Coup* is set in an imaginary African nation called Kush, ruled by a Marxistical Islamic leader named Colonel Hakim Félix Ellelloû, a man who has four wives, goes about the streets of his country in disguise, and was educated in the United States. Do I give away the tone and tenor of *The Coup* if I note that Colonel Ellelloû attended McCarthy College in Franchise, Wisconsin?

It is not quite so simple as that, though very nearly so. *The Coup* is intended, I suspect, as a satire, of the a-plague-on-both-your-condominiums sort, with plenty of contumely to go round for both East and West as they meddle in and destroy the cultures of the Third World. I say "I suspect" because it isn't always clear quite what Updike intends. Not only does he lash out more savagely at the West—which, naturally enough, he knows better than he does the East—but his prose once more gets in the way. Colonel Ellelloû, through whom much of the story is told, sounds curiously like a recent *Time* cover subject—and I don't mean Yasir Arafat. Be they African leaders or Toyota dealers, John Updike heroes all sound very Updikean ("Isn't it funny you only have one voice?"), and Updikean, ventriloquated through Colonel Ellelloû, sounds like this: "I even knew how she would make love: with abashed aggression, tense in her alleged equality of body, primed like a jammed bazooka on the pornographic plastic fetishes and sexual cookbooks of her white tribe and yet, when all cultural discounts are entered, with something of graciousness, of helpless feeling, of an authentic twist at the end. . . ."

IT IS no accident (as the old Marxist polemicists used to say) that this quotation happens to concern sex. Sex has come more and more to fill the pages of John Updike's novels. It is rather surprising, really, that the feminist thought-control police haven't paid these books a visit. When they do so they will find that the women in an Updike novel turn out to be most notable for their legs, breasts, lips, and—as our tender-hearted author himself might put it, in one of his soggier metaphors—damp shady places. In *The Coup*, for example, Colonel Ellelloû is given four wives chiefly because, as near as I can make out, this allows Updike to illustrate four styles of fornication.

What is all the sex doing in John Updike's novels? Is it screwing merely? I would say that it is screwing mostly but not merely. Without its descriptions of sex a novel like *The Coup*, thin enough as it is, would scarcely exist. Although Updike has read a bit of West African history and looked into the Koran and even been to Africa, none of this seems to go very far in moving his novel along. Satire doesn't take him much farther: " 'America is downright loveable,' " an American diplomat in the novel says, " 'America loves all peoples and wants them to be happy, because America loves happiness.' " Heavy thinking—"It may be, Ellelloû reflected . . . that in the attenuation, desiccation, and death of religions the world over, a new religion is being formed in the hearts of men . . . a religion whose antipodes are motion and stasis . . . whose ultimate purpose is entropy"—no, heavy thinking isn't much help either. That would appear to leave only overwriting and sex, and overwriting about sex.

Is it permitted to complain about sex in novels as late as 1983? One would have thought all this was settled decades ago. In "On the Treatment of Sexual Detail in Literature," an essay of 1912, the English philosopher F. H. Bradley allowed that stunted natures, to whom it is not given "to take and enjoy art and literature for what they really are," might be wrongly stimulated by sexual description in books and paintings. But, Bradley concluded with great passion, "What is not tolerable is that stunted natures set up their defects as a standard. It is an outrage, it is sheer blasphemy, when they bring the divine creations of literature and art to the touchstone of their own impotence, their own animalism, and their own immorality." Bradley later had second thoughts and, in a note appended to his essay, he wrote: "And it must be admitted against the novel that, retaining to a greater or lesser extent the aspect of a tale of adventure, it, to speak in general, is prone to exalt the adventurous aspect of sexual

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love, which is not really the aspect which in life possesses most moral importance." Still, Bradley's general point stands: literature must not be restricted in its freedom because of the effect this freedom might have on brutish readers.

F. H. BRADLEY acknowledged that sexual detail "may tend to exalt one-sidely one side of human nature, and possibly depress others." But what he overlooked is what the freedom to write about sex in detail might do to novels and novelists. Aesthetically it has had, I think it fair to say, a generally poor effect on the novel. Among other things, it allows writers, whenever they feel their plots slowing down, to drop their characters into bed. For many contemporary novelists these bedtime moments are the great moments in their books. William Gass, in *On Being Blue*, remarks that as readers we want "the penetration of privacy. We want to see under the skirt. . . ." Is this so? Difficult to say, but what is not difficult to say, what Gass in fact says in his essay, is that "writers remain unduly responsive to it."

Some writers more than others; but enough, I think, to formulate one of those grand dichotomies, like Philip Rahv's division of American writers into Palefaces and Redskins. Today, I believe, the real division is between novelists who are grownups and novelists who despite chronological age have managed to remain boys and girls. The way you can tell the boys and girls is in their interest in purveying sex in the greatest possible detail. Not that grownup novelists are uninterested in sexual relations—Isaac Bashevis Singer, a grownup, has said that he considers nothing quite so interesting to him as a novelist—but rather that they view the actual details as a private matter. Boy and girl novelists, by contrast, are always lifting skirts, dropping trousers, adjusting ropes and pulleys, hooking up dry-cell batteries, bringing in zebras, passing out towels, what have you.

By this standard Norman Mailer is an excellent boy novelist, and so is Philip Roth; Erica Jong and Francine du Plessix Gray are two good girl novelists; one could make a lengthy list of others. The chief way you can tell the boys and girls from the grownups is that in the novels of the former, sex—plain and fancy fornication—is not merely an ornament but absolutely crucial. Without the heavy dosage of sexual detail, their novels wouldn't quite exist.

John Updike is certainly a boy novelist in the sense that many of his novels are unthinkable without their elaborate sexual detail, but he is a boy novelist in other senses, too. In *The Coup*, Colonel Ellelloû, recalling his education in America, notes: "I perceived that a man, in America, is a failed boy." If there is a preponderant emotion running through Updike's novels it is that of boyish yearning, or more precisely the yearning once more to be a boy. In *Rabbit Is Rich*, Harry Angstrom, at his son's wedding, thinks: "Life, just as we first thought, is playing grownup." But the playing, the pretense, is thin, and in John Updike novels men do tend to be boys. Other boys seem either not to notice or to mind; in fact, they greatly approve. The boys who do the book-reviewing in this country widely, even wildly, praised *Rabbit Is Rich*, the third of Updike's novels about Harry Angstrom, the book that won the Pulitzer and other prizes.

Rabbit Is Rich might as easily have been entitled *Rabbit Is Babbitt* (X-rated). In the novel Harry Angstrom, now in his late forties, runs his deceased father-in-law's Toyota agency in the town of Brewer, Pennsylvania. He has been married to Janice Springer now for twenty-three years; they live in his mother-in-law's house; their only son, Nelson, is a student at Kent State. Harry is a careful reader of *Consumer Reports*. He has a 42″ waist and is a Rotarian. He is financially well-off; in a middle-aged sort of way, relatively content. The novel is set in 1979: the gas shortages have begun in earnest, American hostages are locked away in Iran. Through the 400-odd pages of the novel Rabbit ruminates on the decline of America, on the bittersweet goodness of the old days, but mainly on —in the old locker-room phrase— getting laid. "The trouble with you, champ," says one of Rabbit's car salesmen, "is you have screwing on the brain."

Even though the lengthiest of Updike's recent books, *Rabbit Is Rich* is easily the most readable. The reason, I suspect, is that in Harry Angstrom Updike is in real touch with his subject. He isn't in complete touch with it: Rabbit's days at the Toyota agency aren't very convincing in their detail, but then it is difficult to recall an American novelist who has been convincing on the work his characters do since Theodore Dreiser and Sinclair Lewis. Still, the yearning that Rabbit feels as he drives through the town in which he grew up, noting changes and desecrations, calling up boyhood memories, can be very moving. So, too, are the sad exchanges between Rabbit and his hopeless son, and the desolation Rabbit feels at being unable to find any meaning in life. All sorts of interesting bits, lovely touches, aptly captured minor characters—a hip clergyman, a sleek home-improvements salesman, Rabbit's sour mother-in-law—are in *Rabbit Is Rich*. Somehow, one feels, this ought to be a better book than it is.

John Updike knows all about Harry Angstrom, even down to his teeth, which now, in middle age, are jacketed in gold inlays. But it is hard to believe that Updike finally cares for Rabbit, just as it is hard to believe that he cares very much about the decline of American power that he continually alludes to in this novel. They seem merely things to write about. Why, for example, does he deal so perversely with Rabbit, who he more than once hints might be homosexual? ("'I think he's queer,'" his son Nelson says, and in Rabbit's sex fantasies, Updike writes, "The woman's sensations seem nearer to him than the man's"). Why does he make Rabbit so irreducibly sexual a being, whose every thought, every action, every motive begins and ends in sex? "The aim of my fiction," John Updike has said, is to "let literature concern itself, as the Gospels do, with the inner life of hidden man." But the inner life, in Updike's fiction, seems increasingly to be located in the scrotum.

IN Updike's most recent novel,

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Bech Is Back, sex looms less large, and this for a not very complicated reason: it is about a writer, and the writing life is something that John Updike knows well, better even then he knows the life of Harry Angstrom. The writer as a public figure, as celebrity and grist for academic mills, is in fact the subject of two brief Updike novels, written more than a decade apart. Both are about Henry Bech, a blocked New York Jewish writer whose reputation has continued to rise even as his literary output has remained exactly the same.

Reading *Bech: A Book* (1970) and *Bech Is Back* (1982) one after the other, one senses something interesting at work. When *Bech: A Book* was published, American Jewish novelists were riding high; Jewish and novelist seemed almost linked words; and consequently there was more than a touch of acid in Updike's portrait of Henry Bech, who seemed a character created out of the idiosyncrasies of a number of Jewish novelists. *Bech: A Book* was an extended parody, but from time to time an edge of real nastiness cut through, as when an aristocratic English woman says to Bech, " 'You American Jews are so romantic. . . . I hate the "pity me" in all your books' "; or when, mocking Bech's sterility as a writer (as opposed to his own fecundity?), Updike refers to those honorable literary failures who "rather endear a writer to the race of critics, who would rather be reassured of art's noble difficulty than cope with a potent creative verve." Much mockery of the New York intellectual milieu was tossed in—Bech wrote for COMMENTARY, which "let him use a desk"—and another character refers to the New York intellectuals' "heady mixture of art for art's sake and Depression funk."

In *Bech Is Back*, though, the abscess of nastiness has largely drained. As the novel begins, thirteen years have passed, and Bech has maintained his silence; indeed he has won the Melville Medal "awarded every five years to that American author who has maintained the most meaningful silence." In the seven loosely joined stories that comprise *Bech Is Back*, Henry Bech marries, is goaded by his Gentile and suburban wife into writing *Think Big*, a sloppy blockbuster bestseller, and loses such privacy as he had remaining to him. Jabs are made from time to time at critics and reviewers (and, obligatorily, at COMMENTARY). Some of the bits are finely done. Updike is very funny on the changing of the guard in American publishing, where old-style line editors have been replaced by new-style marketing impresarios. Many a nice throwaway line pops up: Bech "had the true New Yorker's secret belief that people being anywhere else had to be, in some sense, kidding."

BUT something rather more interesting has happened between *Bech: A Book* and *Bech Is Back*, and this is that Updike has gone from mockery of Henry Bech to affection for him. In the process Bech, one of America's leading Jewish novelists, has come to seem decidedly less Jewish, and more a member of another minority group: writers on whom society makes endless demands. "The writer's duty to society, Bech had said, was simply to tell the truth, however strange, small, or private his truth appeared." Yet society wants more than truth, to hear *Bech Is Back* tell it; it wants interviews, autographs, photographs, television talk-show appearances, all of which, in this novel, Henry Bech supplies. Not the least ironic touch in *Bech Is Back* is in the line: "Bech was photographed by Jill Krementz, caricatured by David Levine, and interviewed by Michiko Kakutani." For the jacket photograph of John Updike in this book is by Jill Krementz, a fresh caricature of him by David Levine accompanies the favorable review of the book in the *New York Review of Books*, and around the time of the book's publication Updike was interviewed for the New York *Times* by Michiko Kakutani. Ah, me, there goes life imitating art imitating life imitating art imitating life again.

The chief point of both *Bech* books is the tragicomic one that, as novels have become less important in the United States, novelists have come into greater public demand. Updike may speak of the writer's only duty being to tell his own "strange, small, or private" truth, but this truth has itself become stranger, smaller, and more private all the time. Such, for all his own early promise, have John Updike's own truths become, dealing as they for the most part do with ornate sex and social clichés got up in velvet metaphors. In his heart Updike may even know that his own high reputation and success are part of the general swindle, and *Bech Is Back* may be his form of admitting it. If so, that would constitute a strange, small truth that it is nonetheless well to have made public.

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All Turkish, No Delight

Richard Grenier

THE audience of critics at the recent New York Film Festival listened in awe to electronic crackle as the PA system amplified the voice of an unseen presence coming to them from a mysterious location abroad. It was the voice of a man who had been jailed by Turkey for being a Communist, released, jailed again for harboring terrorists, released again, and finally convicted of murdering a Turkish judge. But then he had escaped (the critics were told). Who could be better qualified to speak to them of repression, freedom, human brotherhood?

It was the most thrilling moment I have witnessed in New York artistic life since Philip Agee, the American civil libertarian, his disembodied voice also carried to the audience via telephone, addressed last year's American Writers Congress, sponsored by the *Nation*. Agee spoke of the struggle of Nicaragua, Grenada, and El Salvador against the CIA. The Turk spoke of the struggle against Turkey's "fascist" regime by freedom-loving Turkish gunmen (one of whom recently shot the Pope, it should be remembered).

Both voices, bounced off satellites in the great beyond, seemed to come from places where lions, for all we knew, might already be lying down with lambs, and where political assassinations, for example, could not possibly be taking place at the rate of one every twenty minutes—which unfortunately was the case in Turkey immediately before the 1980 military coup. But the difference between the *Nation*'s rally and the critics attending the New York Film Festival was that Philip Agee was preaching to the converted, while Yilmaz Güney, author of the new film *Yol*, distributed by Columbia Pictures and the first Turkish movie to play Third Avenue, was preaching to the ignorant.

For it must be realized that, with a few notable exceptions, most film critics seem to believe in what might be called a purely cinematographic culture. Which is to say, they feel that everything they need to know about the world, history, or governance can be learned by going to the movies. They supplement this cinema culture with generous gobs of television, no doubt, and bits of fiction here and there. But that is where it generally stops. Barring the notices of such flowerings of our civilization as *The Greening of America* and *The Fate of the Earth*, they show little sign of ever reading anything but movie reviews. This does not stop them from having very pronounced views on politics—provided the general outlines are kept very simple.

The critics at the New York Film Festival, knowing that the Turkish movie had already split the top prize at the more illustrious French festival at Cannes, naturally gave Güney's *Yol* an ovation. And they gave Güney's spectral voice an ovation. And when a reviewer rose during the press conference to ask fervently where he could contribute to the Turkish Liberation Organization (TLO), they gave him an ovation, too. It was liberation all the way.

Now, as it happens, less than a month after the end of the New York Film Festival, Turkey held an election. Actually, it was a referendum on a new constitution, but it would also install for seven years General Kenan Evren, the country's present ruler, as Turkey's duly elected president. The new constitution and Evren won by more than 90 percent. This in itself is no trick in a military autocracy, of course, but Marvine Howe of the New York *Times* (neither the reporter nor the newspaper being known heretofore as a tool of President Reagan or the Pentagon) hailed the result as a "sweeping victory" and a "strong endorsement" of General Evren's regime. Although Evren ran under strict press censorship, and with opposition rallies banned, Miss Howe concluded that the General was nonetheless "genuinely popular," and that it seemed clear the "overwhelming margin of approval" meant the Turkish people were voting "for him and for the junta that he heads."

The Turkish armed forces were generally trusted as "guardians of the nation," Miss Howe wrote. Since taking power in September 1980, they had ended political violence. Recent left-wing terrorist attacks on Turkish offices in Amsterdam and Cologne actually seemed to have been counterproductive at home, she said, striking a "nationalist chord" and probably winning Evren an even greater margin of victory.

The problem before us, you see, is how 90 percent of the Turkish people—right there in Turkey—should have been blind to truths so luminously evident to the assembled film critics at Lincoln Center. But let us examine Yilmaz Güney's movie.

Yol, it must be said (for fair is fair), is a beautifully directed film. Since it was done by "remote control" while Güney was in prison, he did not direct it at all, but whoever did the job (the credit sheet lists Serif Gören) is a talented director. The wild Kurdish landscapes in eastern Turkey are stunningly rendered. The cast is very effective—not too common in Turkish movies. But the film has two joint

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theses, with which the viewer is beaten relentlessly about the head and shoulders: (1) Turkey is under a fascist military dictatorship which is repugnant to every right-thinking person; and (2) Turkey's folk culture is savage and barbaric, and particularly hard on women.

With all due prudence, I would suggest that the first of these propositions has just been repudiated by the Turkish nation, and that only people in Alice Tully Hall do not know this. Fascism is demonstrated in the film by endless marchings about of Turkish soldiers as if in close-order drill, and by endless sound-track recordings of military jets flying overhead—even in desolate Kurdistan without a plane in sight. All this to create the atmosphere of *oppression*.

The second proposition (that traditional Islamic society is repressive, and particularly repressive of women) wins considerable sympathy from me—but I do not accept Güney's view that the present regime encourages everything that is socially retrograde, and that if only the film's insurgents were to triumph all links with the horrid past would be broken. One of Güney's principal characters spends a good bit of time staring longingly across the barbed wire toward Syria—the land of freedom, apparently.

In *Yol* ("the way"), four convicts, imprisoned on a Turkish island in the Aegean, are granted furloughs to visit their families in Turkey's hinterland. The film is a portrayal of Turkish society as seen through their parallel furloughs.

Convict No. 1, the most handsome, meets a pretty girl in his home village, she indicates her fondness for him, and they become engaged. He thereupon begins to treat her in the most obnoxious manner possible, angrily forbidding her to wear pretty dresses, to talk to other men, and even to engage in idle chitchat. For himself, freshly engaged to be married, he goes off to a whorehouse for entertainment. This section of *Yol* is a ringing condemnation of the double standard and the repression of women, and here Güney has my full support.

Convict No. 2, a Kurd, on furlough to *his* home village, is revealed as having committed an act of great cowardice, abandoning a brother-in-law to his death while under fire on some criminal enterprise. The judgment of the dead man's family is that he should be ostracized, but the culprit's wife joins him in defiance of this judgment, for which act of love and forgiveness her own younger brothers gun her down: wife and husband together. Here I am somewhat equivocal. The punishment we are shown is savagely out of proportion to the offense committed. But having spent formative years in the military, I believe that bravery under fire is one of the virtues without which nations cannot survive, and I can understand a community's desire to punish cowardice, as I can its urge to esteem valor.

In the story of convict No. 3, another Kurd, Güney curiously switches around and seems to agree with me, shifting his ground in accordance with the situation. Convict No. 3, when not staring soulfully at freedom across the border in Syria, spends most of his time pinned down in peasant huts while Kurdish insurgents (off camera) take on the Turkish army. Here bravery under fire seems to be a good thing, and cowardice very bad.

But the story of convict No. 4, still another Kurd, is *Yol*'s longest and most elaborate. Learning even before his furlough that his wife has run off to a nearby town to become a prostitute, the hero returns home to find that her relatives, for the honor of the family, have recaptured her and have been keeping her in chains in the cellar for the last eight months, not even allowing her to wash. They wanted to kill her out of hand, but, with a discriminating sense of niceties, have kept her alive, feeling the husband himself would want to perform this cleansing act. When the husband finally sees his erring wife, she begs him to allow her to bathe before he kills her. The whole story of this man and his wife is horrifying and seems, alas, true to life throughout the entire region (more true of Syria, in fact, than of Turkey).

The prestige reviewers were enthusiastic in their praise of *Yol*: "a miracle," "a revelation," "shattering," "unbearably courageous." Two weeks after the Turkish elections, of which he seemed blithely oblivious, a critic from the *Village Voice* provided the keenest ideological analysis of the film, declaring confidently: "Güney produced a movie so explosive that were it shown in his homeland it would signal the prelude to revolution."

Here the reviewer seemed to realize that he was in trouble. He had declared sweepingly that the center of the whole film was the repression of Kurds—but why should Turks rise in rebellion to free Kurds from Turkey? Would Spaniards rise to free Basques from Spain? The British to free Belfast Catholics from Britain? The French to free Bretons from France? To resolve this problem, the *Voice* reviewer made a dizzying semantic leap, proclaiming: "*Yol* is about the essential, unspeakable Kurdishness of Turkey . . . all Turks are now Kurds—the oppressed of the oppressed."

The only remaining problem was that unenlightened Turks in Turkey do not seem to know that they are Kurds. They give every sign of thinking they're still Turks. (In fact, most of the *Kurds* in Turkey seem to think they're Turks.) But the critic dashed fearlessly on, dealing now with the sexual question:

> To be a Turk is to be a Kurd, to be a Turkish woman is to be a Kurd's slave—such is life before the revolution. Virtually the only other recent political film I know that constructs so vivid and devastating a model of pre-revolutionary consciousness is Vivienne Dick's super-8 *Beauty Becomes Beast*. . . .

So the proper *Village Voice* "mindset" with which to view *Yol*, particularly regarding women, is that it is a vivid and devastating model of pre-revolutionary consciousness. Yet a recent documentary on the Public Broadcasting Service, for people of a similar mindset, proved conclusively that when Sadat tried to liberate Egyptian women the Egyptian masses did not like it, and that such an effort was therefore very misguided and even wicked. It is as if someone very, very high up had decided that to keep women in a state of submission

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in Egypt is wise, prudent, and statesmanlike, but that to keep women in a state of submission in Turkey produces a model of pre-revolutionary consciousness.

BEHIND all this gibberish lie some simple facts, which I disclose with the sad reluctance of a parent revealing that there is no tooth fairy. Syria (not a single reviewer mentioned it) has a two-year-old treaty of friendship with the Soviet Union. Turkey, on the other hand (also unmentioned, although some reviewers must surely have been dimly aware of it), is a member of NATO, the eastern flank of the Atlantic alliance. The Kurds of Turkey, like the ETA Basques of Spain and the IRA Provos of Ulster, have been selected (no doubt by someone very high up, again) as one of those worthy, wonderful ethnic groups in NATO countries whose separatist tendencies should be encouraged by all persons of conscience, even though their activities, sadly, will cause the maximum of havoc in the host country. It will be noticed that Güney himself, a Turk of Kurdish ancestry—always a Marxist and a revolutionary sympathizer, identified at various times as a Stalinist, Maoist, and follower of Albania's Enver Hoxha—only "took up" Kurdish nationalism after 1975. But I would not presume to look into Yilmaz Güney's heart; it might all have been the result of some sort of mid-life crisis.

For those benighted Americans who cannot tell a Kurd from a Turk, all *Yol*'s ethnic abracadabra, to be frank, comes to strictly nought. For them, a lot of Kurdish nationalism has been wasted here. What these Americans are seeing is the film I have already described, a story of a people repressed by military dictatorship, with harsh folkways, falling with particular cruelty on women.

And *Yol* is having a substantial success—substantial for an Italian film, let's say, and totally unprecedented for a Turkish film. It is one of the most successful foreign-language movies of the fall of 1982, which is to say that in the week I write, high-minded New Yorkers with concern for oppressed peoples and a sense of social justice paid $10,000 to see it. In the same week, other New Yorkers (whom I will leave it to the reader to describe) paid an even million dollars to see Sylvester Stallone's new, quite amazingly martial *First Blood*. The two films' respective audiences stand at almost exactly one hundred to one, a proportion worth keeping in mind.

Given the prevailing editorial tone of those newspapers read by moviegoers (an economic and educational elite, remember), plus that of the Public Broadcasting Service, and even of some speeches made on the floor of the Congress of the United States, one might have thought that the ecstatic reviews for *Yol* would have brought out bigger crowds. Where are the Third Worlders, the world bankers, the defenders of the pacific Islamic world against that ravenous predator, Israel?

The key to the answer might be in the behavior of the official representative of the U.S. National Endowment for the Arts at the recent UNESCO conference on culture in Mexico City, who (as reported by Dorothy Rabinowitz in the November 1982 COMMENTARY) went about assuring anyone who would listen that the U.S. had a civilization *in no way superior* to that of any other country anywhere. Now what would a woman like this think of *Yol*, which, for all its sins and false attribution of blame, bitterly condemns practices this woman would evidently rather not think existed to begin with? I have the conviction that most Americans of a "liberal" cast of mind, and hence almost by definition marvelously respectful of other cultures, are in a state of the most pitiful ignorance as to the true nature of these cultures they profess to admire. And they are staying away from *Yol*, as they say, in droves.

For all *Yol*'s skewed politics, I think these people should see this movie. Keeping in mind that the folkways depicted are not limited to Kurds, or Turkey, but with some variations are pandemic throughout Islam and have counterparts in many other parts of the globe, they might get some notion of what societies are actually like in that undifferentiated limbo they think of piously as the Third World. They should go take a good look. See what it's like out there.

* * *

As the fourth anniversary approaches of my first contribution to COMMENTARY on film, I note with some surprise that I have not been attacked for what I was almost certain would provoke indignant protest: my contention that the cinema has become a highly ideologized medium. A friend, writing in the columns of *Newsweek*, has taken polite issue with me on a point or two. Spirited letters to COMMENTARY have taken issue with me on a great number of points. But my general thesis—so contrary to the popular wisdom that movies are "just entertainment," historically encapsulated in the dictum, "If I want to send a message I'll use Western Union"—has gone largely unchallenged. Except, as I have explained, in the peculiar fraternity of film critics, the recognition seems to be spreading that "quality" films in general have become heavily politicized. And so too have many mass-market, popular films.

In a brilliant article in the premier issue of the *New Criterion* ("The Literary Life Today," September 1982) Joseph Epstein makes a convincing case that a comparable politicization has contributed to the impoverishment of the present literary culture. I am really not prepared to level such a harsh judgment on the present-day cinema, since a movie is the work of so many hands, often such a mixed bag of talents, and a film sometimes simply fails effectively to convey its didactic point (or is worth seeing for other reasons even when it does, like *Yol*). But that the movies are rife with political polemic is becoming more obvious every day, whether the subject is feminism, crime, foreign policy, gay rights, nuclear power, the press, the law, the environment, the military, "big business," and so on, almost *ad infinitum*. For those who do not read the trade journals of the entertainment industry, I offer a few recent notes:

Actors' Equity of New York, the actors' labor union, has just awarded its annual Paul Robeson Award to Ed Asner—in effect, for his activity in favor of the rebels in El Salvador.

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(The winner of the first Paul Robeson Award, ten years ago, was Paul Robeson.) This same Ed Asner is at present playing the lead in a movie version of E.L. Doctorow's *The Book of Daniel* (director: Sidney Lumet), a work which, shall I say, gives an attractive picture of two atomic spies strongly resembling Ethel and Julius Rosenberg. Gene Hackman (*The French Connection*) and Nick Nolte are in Mexico making a pro-Sandinista movie about Nicaragua. A new film, *Endangered Species*, which begins with the winning statement that it is based on "available facts," has as its thesis that wealthy American superpatriots, in connivance with occult elements in the military and in Washington, are carrying on secret biological- and chemical-warfare experiments from an abandoned missile silo in Colorado and mercilessly killing all good, honest Americans who discover their malign activity. The film, although well shot by director Alan Rudolph (*Welcome to L.A.*), proved an ignominous fiasco and was withdrawn in two weeks.

The Rosenberg movie and the Sandinista movie may do no better, of course, at least in the United States. But it should not be forgotten that about half of the U.S. film industry's total revenue comes from abroad, and that there are foreign countries, among them a number of our Western European allies, which just gobble up anti-American films from Hollywood. It is one of the less appealing idiosyncrasies of our present situation that some Hollywood producers—whose poisonously anti-American films are often humiliating failures in the U.S.—make great sums of money selling these same films in foreign markets. Movies championing the Rosenbergs and the Sandinistas, or affirming that the U.S. is illegally developing weapons of chemical warfare (breathing not a word of the Soviet "yellow rain," naturally) have rosy commercial prospects in many parts of the world. Their producers, no doubt, would describe them as their contributions to international understanding.

As for *E.T.* (on whose magical success formula I have expounded in an earlier article, "Summertime Visions," August 1982), its admirers should be pleased to learn that it has just been awarded the United Nations Peace Medal for its "special and unique contribution to the cause of peace." Only someone who has sat (as I have recently done) through hour after hour of the vicious diatribe that passes for debate in the United Nations, gotten a feeling for the lynch-mob atmosphere that pervades the place, and heard the enraged vilification to which the United States is subjected there by some of the world's most violent and repressive governments, will fully appreciate the honor of such an award. As it happens, the United Nations' approval rating in the U.S. has fallen so low that *E.T.*'s distributors made no use of this unexpected distinction, but Steven Spielberg, the director, appeared at Turtle Bay to accept the medal, believing as he does in peace, and no doubt even in the United Nations.

The good news from overseas is that *Stripes*, Bill Murray's huge box-office hit in America last year, is now a huge hit in Lebanon as well. I argued at length in these pages ("Arms & the Movies," October 1981) that *Stripes*, although a comedy, is distinctly patriotic—something of a turn-around for Murray, who seems to have come by his patriotism by a process of trial and error. But about other elements in the film there can be no argument, and they provide points of almost eerie correspondence. Murray's side-kick is a Jew (unmistakable). American soldiers, they fight their enemy, the Russians. They win. And at the end it is *The Stars and Stripes Forever*. If the Lebanese are lining up to see the movie *Stripes*, they just might be telling us something.

BUT the most astounding example of political content has just occurred in no less a movie than the giant hit of the fall season: Sylvester Stallone's *First Blood*. And this political content has gone entirely unreported by film critics. The general social context of this film is best set out thematically.

The United States has just inaugurated in Washington, at long last, a Vietnam Veterans War Memorial. William Broyles, the new editor of *Newsweek*, a former Marine lieutenant in Vietnam, declared in a highly emotional article that these men had answered their country's call, and fought bravely and well, and, also, that the memorial was "less than the dead deserved."

Shortly before the inauguration of the memorial, Stallone's *First Blood* was released. The critics called the film "stupid," "implausible," "violent," the more thoughtful among them concluding that it sent a "mixed message" with respect to the military character. Should a civilized country have Green Berets? Or, perhaps, not. For John Rambo (Stallone) had been a Green Beret in Vietnam. (The literate will note that Rambo is a mere anglicization of "Rimbaud," France's dark genius, considered a poet of hallucinatory alienation.) The week ending October 27, *First Blood* was the number-one film in the country. The week ending November 3, it was the number-one film in the country. And so it went for the weeks ending November 10, November 17, and November 24, and the end is not in sight. The trade journals have just declared that *First Blood* is not only the biggest hit of the season, but, on that scale, it is the *only* hit of the season. I finally caught up with this *First Blood*, and found it delivered one of the most *un*mixed messages I have ever seen in a movie.

Rambo, wearing his old army fatigue jacket with the red-white-and-blue stitched over the left pocket, comes drifting into a small town in the Pacific Northwest to look up an old buddy from the Green Berets, only to find that he has died of cancer. Rambo is treated with the most extreme hatefulness by the civilians of this small town (much hyperbole here), is arrested for vagrancy, breaks out of jail, and carries on a one-man war (entirely defensive) in the hills and in the town to prevent his recapture. I will quote only two speeches. First, Rambo's colonel from the Green Berets, brought in to reason with him, speaking to the local sheriff:

> It's going to look great in Arlington Cemetery. "John Rambo. Congressional Medal of Honor. Carried out countless missions behind the enemy lines in Vietnam. Shot for vagrancy in Jerkwater, U.S.A."

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Second, Rambo himself, his last lines in the film, delivered with great emotion to his colonel before he gives himself up:

> I didn't want to go there! You sent me! We did our best to win! But somebody didn't want us to win! And then I come home and they call me a baby killer and I can't even get a job in a car wash! . . .

Now I think that *First Blood* is one of the easiest movies to figure out that I've ever seen in my life. The vets understand it. The moviegoers understand it. Only the reviewers, for some reason, found it murky. Not a single major critic in the country even suggested that Rambo's alienation from civilian society might have been produced by the way he was treated when he returned home from Vietnam.

I would not want to make *First Blood* appear either more or less than it is. It is a popular, mass-market movie. It depends a great deal on well-shot, violent action, the mythic theme of the loner, every man's hand against him. It has Sylvester Stallone, a very big star (but who has had his resounding flops as well—there isn't a star in Hollywood who commands an automatic audience). It is well directed by Ted Kotcheff (*North Dallas Forty*), who seems rarely to miss the mark when handling rough, violent men. Stallone himself is co-scenario writer. The film contains at least one grievous historical distortion. It was not ordinary Americans in small towns who were so contemptuous of the Vietnam veterans, but university students, the children of the privileged, who avoided the war thanks to educational deferments.

Still, what the film has to say stands forth with remarkable clarity. For it is civilians who draw "first blood" in their hounding of this alienated Vietnam vet drifter. And the title has another level of meaning as well: *Who drew first blood in Vietnam*? A controversial subject, some would say, but not, perhaps, Sylvester Stallone. I have the impression, moreover, that Sylvester Stallone is one of these simple people who feel that when a great nation commits itself to war, it should win. And if it fails to win, there is the devil to pay.

WELL, they tell me it is over now. College students with educational deferments have stopped spitting on working-class youths serving their country. Suburban hearts no longer leap high at the sight of the Vietcong flag brandished fearlessly in Scarsdale. McGeorge Bundy and Robert McNamara, whose exquisitely calibrated escalation promised us victory in Vietnam without our even feeling any pain, have recently, heads high, accepted a "peace" prize for a dazzling new initiative in the completely different area of nuclear-weapons theory. At the end of a week of commemorative ceremonies in Washington, neither Bundy, McNamara, Walt Rostow, nor Dean Rusk had visited the new memorial to the 57,939 Americans they sent to their deaths in Vietnam. But that was such a long time ago.

Speaking of the entertainment industry, I can report that Jimmy Stewart, who did more fighting in World War II than any other star of that earlier Hollywood, came to Washington and at Constitution Hall movingly read a patriotic letter from the son of a soldier killed in Vietnam. And now we have *First Blood*. I don't feel it is overinterpreting this movie to think that Sylvester Stallone might want some inscription on that black mortuary monument to accompany the names of the 57,939 dead. It is a severe understatement of the burden of his film to say that an inscription might at least read: *They died for their country*. But this inscription is not there, and the names are engraved on a black, tomblike wall, for such was the decision of the panel of judges, who are artistic professionals of course, and, like movie critics, have no politics.

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Books in Review

Land of Promise

ON EQUAL TERMS: JEWS IN AMERICA 1881-1981. By LUCY S. DAWIDOWICZ. *Holt, Rinehart & Winston. 194 pp. $12.95.*

Reviewed by MICHAEL NOVAK

LUCY S. DAWIDOWICZ first prepared this study for the *American Jewish Year Book* to mark the hundredth anniversary of the beginnings of Jewish mass migration from Eastern Europe in 1881. For this book, her text has been enlarged and embellished with statistics and a very useful chronology of important events in American Jewish history.

As a narrative, this account reads very smoothly, and an irenic tone —one might almost say, an ecumenical tone—pervades it. This is not hagiography or polemic, glorification or excuse. For one who is not Jewish, albeit an aficionado of the literature of immigration, the story Mrs. Dawidowicz tells is not only informative but—when all is said and done—breathtaking.

Sometimes, it seems, American Jews, involved in scores of intramural controversies, hardly recognize how spectacular their achievement in America has been against the backdrop of history. Most American Jews (like most Catholics) were not quite ready to celebrate their first hundred years in America when the United States was celebrating its bicentennial in 1976. For many of us, arrival in America is still a family memory. And one has to know what history has been like in other places—in Poland and in Russia, in Germany, France, Britain—to grasp the full weight of Mrs. Dawidowicz's words as she summarizes the American difference:

> The United States was the first country in the world to give the Jews political equality and religious liberty, enabling them, as no other nation-state had, fully to exercise their rights as citizens and, at the same time, freely to observe their religion, sustain their traditions, and perpetuate their culture.

The migration to America was the largest single dispersion of the Jews in history, an epic story that has not yet been fully told. To America, in a manner perhaps unknown even to themselves, the Jews brought skills and social habits that equipped them for the unprecedented historical experiment they were about to embark upon. For one thing, as Mrs. Dawidowicz notes, infant mortality was unusually low among Jews. For another, "networking" was a highly developed art. One may wonder if any group in history has perfected such skills of cooperative social life and institution-building. In some sense, the Jews were a democratic people —at least in the sense of forming committees—even before democratic society gave them scope for their abilities.

An additional feature that served the Jews well and to which Mrs. Dawidowicz points is economic—the marked Jewish preference for self-employment. "The Great Depression," she writes, "halted Jewish mobility, but . . . because so many Jews were self-employed, they seemed to weather economic hardships better than those masses of Americans employed in America's basic industries." This habit clearly differentiated Jews from many of the Catholic immigrants of the same period who disproportionately sought industrial work (or Protestant immigrants who flocked to the Midwest to become farmers).

And then there was, underlying their economic behavior, a particularly Jewish orientation to the future. Most Jewish immigrants, even those not socialist (a proportion that has anyway been overstated by, among others, Irving Howe in *World of Our Fathers*), "subscribed to the secular messianism that the radicals preached: the hope for a better world." This hope was not disappointed: "As the decade of the 1930's came to an end, Jews in America had clearly become the most fortunate Jews in the world."

"THE promise of American democracy and egalitarianism," Mrs. Dawidowicz writes, "was that any penniless immigrant could make it, that everyone could become part of middle-class America." There is something of a problem here, a large issue which Mrs. Dawidowicz hardly has space to raise. It has to do with the peculiar conflict that arises in America—for Jews as for others—when the promise of middle-class status is once realized. In focusing as she does on the internal tensions between German and Eastern European Jews, or among the Orthodox, Reform, and Conservative movements, or between loyalty to tradition (both ethnic and religious) and the forces of Americanization, Mrs. Dawidowicz overlooks somewhat the *spiritual* tension that exists between the self-professed values of many Jews and their achieved position in society.

For the fact is that the very promise of life in a commercial republic—that "everyone could become part of middle-class America" —runs at cross purposes with many of our ethnic, religious, and intellectual traditions. To put it starkly, many of us have been brought up to think ill of middle-class life, if not to despise it. To say of someone that he is bourgeois, or has middle-class taste, is no compliment. Thus the abiding cultural contradiction of American life: the promise of the nation is denied by disesteem for its fulfillment.

This is a serious moral and intellectual matter, and one that goes far beyond issues of economic security. I doubt whether Jews, or Christians, in any other age, in any other class, under any other regime, have achieved, in such large numbers, the ordinary graces of civilized

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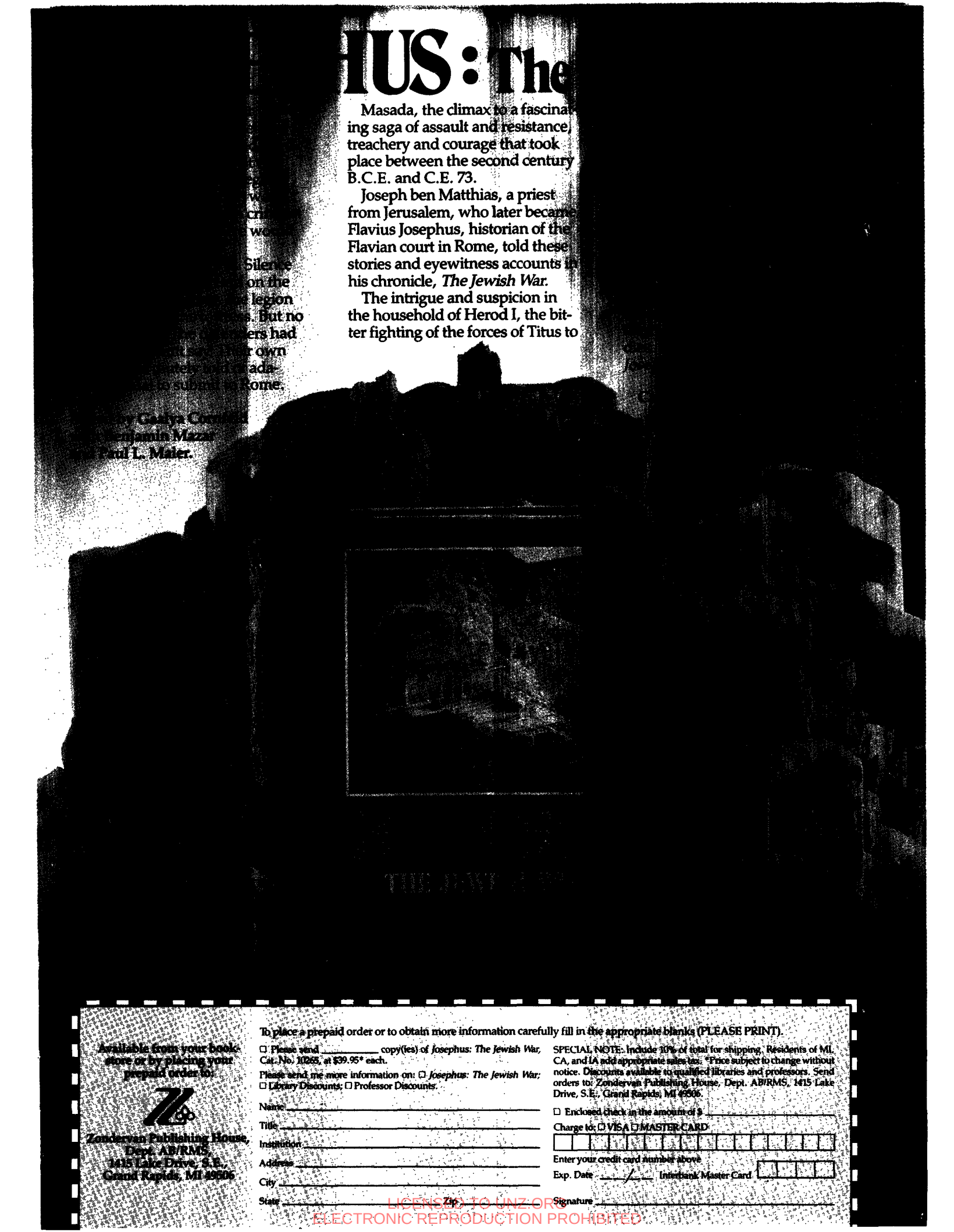
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life that they have in middle-class America. Among those civilized and civilizing virtues are the arts of tolerance, cooperation, benevolence, fellow-feeling, compromise, sympathy between peoples, and pride in one another's success. These are the values by which most Americans steer their course, and they are quintessentially middle-class. Yet neither the Jewish nor the Christian religious tradition, nor secular messianism, quite prepares us to celebrate them, and the exercise of denying their connection with the middle class has involved many Jews (and other Americans) in prodigious bouts of self-hatred.

Mrs. Dawidowicz, herself, exemplifies these civilizing values in her book. She is uncommonly sympathetic to Catholics and to Protestants, trying to see things as they must see them. In this way she redeems yet another promise of American democracy, the promise of pluralism or, as she puts it, "the interplay of living cultures." In her epilogue she cites with approval the church historian Winthrop Hudson, who pointed to the "dual commitments" of a pluralist society, "in which the integrity of different faiths is preserved while adherents of the several traditions engage in open dialogue." As Hudson went on to note, and as Mrs. Dawidowicz shows convincingly in this little book, "From the long experience of Judaism, Americans of other faiths can learn how this may be done with both grace and integrity."

Back to the Raft

WHAT WAS LITERATURE? CLASS CULTURE AND MASS SOCIETY. By LESLIE FIEDLER. *Simon & Schuster. 258 pp. $14.95.*

Reviewed by KENNETH S. LYNN

As Leslie Fiedler himself acknowledges in his latest book, *What Was Literature?*, the only reason the editor Philip Rahv decided to publish Fiedler's "Come Back to the Raft Ag'in, Huck Honey!" in the June 1948 issue of *Partisan Review* was that he was convinced that the essay was a *jeu d'esprit*. In Rahv's estimation, Fiedler did not mean it when he declared that Huck Finn had a "homoerotic crush" on his fellow runaway Nigger Jim, that the love between "white male and black" was American civilization's "archetypal" dream, and that our psychic "ambivalence" was "refracted" in the novels and poems of "every generation" of American writers from the very beginning of the Republic.

Depressingly enough, Fiedler did mean it—and still does. Thirty-five years have gone by in his career as a literary critic and professor of English and he still has not developed the detachment to admit that in defining the sexual vision of such 19th-century authors as James Fenimore Cooper, Herman Melville, and Mark Twain he had merely imposed upon them a 20th-century view of male sexuality which was very much under discussion in the United States in the early months of 1948 as the result of the publication of a best-selling sociological study. Whether consciously or unconsciously, Fiedler distorted the masculine relationships in the *Leatherstocking Tales*, *Moby-Dick*, and *Huckleberry Finn* in order to bring them into line with the sensational assertion in *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male*, by Alfred C. Kinsey and associates, that "perhaps the major portion of the male population [in the United States] has at least some homosexual experience between adolescence and old age."

In a critique of the Kinsey Report in the April 1948 *Partisan Review*, Lionel Trilling failed to challenge its highly dubious statistics. He did, however, make some searching comments about its editorial bias. Although the authors of the Report claimed to be scientifically neutral about the various taboo practices they discussed, they actually were engaged in arguing for their moral acceptance, on the authority of animal behavior. "Thus, in order to show that homosexuality is not a neurotic manifestation, as the Freudians say it is, the Report adduces the homosexual behavior of rats." Trilling also observed that the authors kept stressing how large an incidence of homosexuality they had encountered in the American male population as a further means of justifying their contention that homosexuality was a healthy form of sexual expression. In the behavioristic world of the Kinsey Report, whatever was was natural.

Kinsey and his colleagues were profoundly anti-intellectual, in Trilling's opinion. They seemed to believe that making intellectual distinctions between forms of sexual expression inevitably led to social discrimination or exclusion. They rejected the conclusions of psychoanalysis which made sexual conduct an important clue to character and which viewed the etiology of homosexuality as lying in some warp of the psychic structure. In the teeth of evidence to the contrary, Kinsey and his associates insisted that the emotional illness which impels the homosexual to find psychiatric help was merely the result of the fear of social disapproval of his sexual conduct.

Two months later and in the pages of the same magazine, Fiedler implicitly replied to Trilling. The greatest books of America's greatest writers were witnesses to the fact that homoerotic relationships were splendidly natural, especially when they were interracial, and it was only the deadly prejudices of a morally suffocated society which doomed those beautiful relationships to defeat. "In each generation," Fiedler wrote in the concluding paragraph of "Come Back to the Raft,"

> we *play out* the impossible mythos, and we live to see our children play it: the white boy and the black we can discover wrestling affectionately on any American sidewalk, along which they will walk in adulthood, eyes averted from each other, unwilling to touch even by accident. The dream recedes; the immaculate passion and the astonishing reconciliation become a memory, and less, a regret, at last the unrecognized motifs of a child's book. "It's too good to be true, Honey," Jim says to Huck. "It's too good to be true."

The out-of-context quotation of Nigger Jim's words to Huck was

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KENNETH S. LYNN, *who teaches history at Johns Hopkins, is the author of* The Air-Line to Seattle, *to be published in March (University of Chicago Press).*

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This month in . . .

The New Criterion

A monthly review *edited by Hilton Kramer*

Writers in Eastern Europe *by Hortense Calisher*
Metrical illiteracy *by Brad Leithauser*
David Smith in Washington *by Hilton Kramer*
The poetry of Robert Lowell *by Donald Petersen*

Art: The Anselm Kiefer exhibition *by Sanford Schwartz*;
Music: Getting on records *by Samuel Lipman*; **Architecture:** Frank Lloyd Wright at the Metropolitan Museum *by William H. Jordy*
Books: *Carter Ratcliff* John Singer Sargent *reviewed by Dan Hofstadter*; *Irving Howe* A margin of hope: an intellectual autobiography *reviewed by Hilton Kramer*; *André Le Vot* F. Scott Fitzgerald *reviewed by James R. Mellow*; *Robert Darnton* The literary underground of the old regime *reviewed by Robert Nisbet*; *John Haffenden* The life of John Berryman *reviewed by Vernon Young*; **Fiction chronicle** *by Joshua Gilder*

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typical of the outrageous tricks to which Fiedler resorted—apparently without any awareness of wrongdoing—throughout the essay. So eager was he to challenge both the folk wisdom of the American people and the clinical wisdom of the psychoanalysts, so fervently was he dreaming of a Kinseyesque America of sexual pluralism and guilt-free self-indulgence, that he found it easy to convince himself that every important American writer from Cooper to Faulkner was on his side. The authors of the Kinsey Report believed in their dubious statistics no more firmly than Fiedler did in his fraudulent vision of American literature.

As Fiedler's most recent book reminds us, "Come Back to the Raft" equated American society with the death of love; only in the wilderness, on a whaling ship or a raft could the "idyllic anti-marriage" of male companions be brought to "consummation." In three subsequent volumes, *Love and Death in the American Novel* (1960), *Waiting for the End* (1964), and *The Return of the Vanishing American* (1968), Fiedler reverted again and again to this argument, and to the same disreputable tricks for making it seem plausible. Only by violating all standards of critical responsibility was he able to demonstrate that America's writers had never accepted their society's moral standards.

No OTHER professor worked harder than Fiedler did to prepare the way for the anarchic hedonism that overtook our colleges and universities in the late 1960's. And when the children who had been born in the year of "Come Back to the Raft" finally began to display the same degree of contempt for official values that he had always expressed, Fiedler took care to remind the young rebels of how "with it" he was. Thus he told an interviewer from the Washington *Post* in 1969 that high-school teachers ought to be made to read Norman O. Brown, Timothy Leary, and other "New Gurus," while their students should be given Tolkien rather than Spenser, or Milton, or "stuffier verse entertainers of the 19th century like, say, Tennyson." In the process of providing additional proof of his infantile credentials, Fiedler also managed to get himself "busted" for turning his home in Buffalo, New York, into a premise where young people smoked marijuana.

Even after the return of peace to the campuses, Fiedler continued to court the approval of the most immature members of his audience. I was an entertainer, he says in *What Was Literature?*, who was "paid to allay boredom . . . by making our country and our culture seem more interesting and amusing than most academic accounts would lead us to believe." Yet in spite of his efforts to allay it, the boredom of the students continued to spread. Surveying the contemporary academic scene, Fiedler finds nothing but bad news in the areas in which he has always worked. Enrollments in the humanities are "sagging," and no wonder, for literary criticism in the university has become "impossible," except in "institutionalized self-parodic form."

This assessment of the current state of affairs in literary studies is not without substance. What Fiedler fails to acknowledge, however, is that the situation he deplores is one which he himself helped to create. For if the New Criticism of the 50's and 60's divorced texts from contexts, and the Post-Structuralism of the 70's and 80's has sought to abolish authors, Fiedler, too, has done his best to impoverish the study of literature by breaking down standards and transforming academic study into a theater of the self. "After more than four decades, one of the few things I believe I have really learned is that the teacher . . . teaches not so much his subject matter as himself."

FAR from admitting his own generous share of culpability for today's dreary scene in the humanities, Fiedler proclaims a need to carry the campaign of destruction onward. The establishment of a curriculum that included Spenser, Milton, and Tennyson represented, according to him, the first revolution in American academic culture. When that revolution ran out of steam a second revolution was launched which brought a host of "less respectable" authors, from Mark Twain to the science fictionists, into the curriculum. Now that that second revolution has also failed, "the time for a third revolution . . . is at hand."

In a final pathetic attempt to reclaim his status as a guru of the young, the author of *What Was Literature?* proposes that the academic distinction between high and low culture be completely obliterated, and that courses be offered in which the "songs and stories" of Mark Twain, Shakespeare, Dickens, Edgar Rice Burroughs, Margaret Mitchell, and Alex Haley be conjoined with the "songs and stories" of videoland—*Starsky and Hutch, Kojak, Hill Street Blues,* and *Tenspeed and Brownshoe.* For are not all of these achievements, *Hill Street Blues* no less than *Huckleberry Finn,* replete with the myths, fables, archetypes, and fantasies America craves? By thus joining together the sundered elements of our culture, Fiedler asserts in the most self-parodic of all of his arguments, the terrible age gap between teachers and students will at last be bridged, and the university will become a refuge—a sort of gigantic raft, as it were—where Americans will be "no longer separated from each other."

The Yeast & the Flour

NOTES OF A REVOLUTIONARY. By ANDREI AMALRIK. Translated by GUY DANIELS. *Knopf. 343 pp. $16.95.*

Reviewed by ADRIAN KARATNYCKY

ANDREI AMALRIK is associated in the public memory with his influential treatise, *Will the Soviet Union Survive Until 1984?* Written in 1969, this brief and provocative book predicted the dissolution of Soviet society as a result of internal separatist tendencies among the non-Russian nationalities, the absence of democratizing forces, and a likely Sino-Soviet war.

Will the Soviet Union Survive

ADRIAN KARATNYCKY, *a new contributor, is research director of the A. Philip Randolph Institute and associate editor of* Workers Under Communism, *a quarterly journal.*

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CHAIM RAPHAEL in THE JEWISH CHRONICLE

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Until 1984? was a signpost, marking the transformation of the Soviet dissident movement from a mainly literary phenomenon into a political one. The book achieved international celebrity for its author, who until then had been an obscure historian expelled from Moscow University for a paper offering a nonconformist interpretation of 9th-century Russian history and who had already served two-and-a-half years' forced exile for promoting the work of dissident artists. And it also earned him nearly six more years of prison, forced labor, and Siberian exile.

In 1976, after serving out his sentence, Amalrik was coaxed into emigrating under threat of another term of imprisonment. From the moment he arrived in the West, he was a vocal and effective publicist who traveled and lectured widely on Soviet affairs and human rights. His death in 1980 in an auto accident, en route to a Madrid conference of Soviet-bloc dissidents, cut short the productive life of a highly original theorist and advocate of democratic change—and a remarkable literary talent.

ONE might think that the work of Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, Vladimir Bukovsky, and Andrei Sinyavsky would have left little room for original contributions to what, thanks to the persistence of Soviet totalitarianism, has regrettably become a literary genre. Yet in *Notes of a Revolutionary*, a memoir of the years 1966 to 1976, Amalrik gives us a view of the Gulag that seems entirely new. Among chroniclers of the Soviet prison camps only Amalrik is interested in the political opinions of the inmate population. From him we not only learn, for example, that the attitudes of ordinary criminals toward the Soviet regime are almost unanimously negative, but that "the younger people [are] more anti-government than the older generation." In the five years between Amalrik's two arrests, moreover, there had developed a spectacular growth in anti-Soviet sentiments within the prison population.

In a totalitarian state, the prison camp is perhaps the only place in which social relations are stripped of their masks. Prisoners, after all, have nothing more to lose, and therefore nothing to hide. More significantly, as Amalrik sarcastically notes, "A penal camp is a microcosm of the socialist society. It guarantees all those social and economic rights of which the Soviet authorities are so proud and toward which socialists strive: the right to paid labor, food, clothing, and medical care."

Amalrik's descriptions of his captors are scrupulously fair. Under the brutal conditions of prison life he is able to remember clearly and to record the small kindnesses and gestures which humanize even the escort guards, prison officials, and prosecutors. (Only a chronicler as good-natured as Amalrik would tell us that the judge at his trial resembled the French actor Jean Gabin.) In this way he allows us to penetrate the psychology of the police state whose requirements transform its citizens into daily participants in an elaborate theater of cruelty.

The society that emerges from the pages of *Notes of a Revolutionary* is one whose underpinning is the humiliation of the individual by the unfettered state. There are the endless searches, which lead one to feel that "you have no home—that nothing is really yours." There is the degradation of Amalrik's wife Gusel, who is subjected to friskings and threatened with a gynecological "search" when she comes to visit her husband in the prison camp. But then there is also the other side of this humiliation, the struggle of the individual to secure for himself a sense of dignity. Aware that arrest is imminent, Amalrik and his wife leave for a respite in their country cottage. And when at last the authorities come, he passively resists, clinging tenaciously to an armchair until he is carried away on his makeshift throne "like a Chinese emperor."

WHILE most of this memoir is told from the vantage point of prison and forced exile, Amalrik's briefer account of life in the relative comfort of Moscow is equally rewarding and fresh. Amalrik is frank in his portrayal of several colleagues in the democratic movement. From these portraits we learn that the road toward open dissent is rarely taken consciously or as the result of a rigorous world view. Rather, the progress into political opposition is often gradual and hesitant. Nor are these dissidents saintly in their personal behavior. *Notes of a Revolutionary* contains several unflattering (though at times amusing) descriptions of a world marked by human failings: lack of seriousness, drunkenness, moral debauchery.

But Amalrik's most scathing portrayals are of Western journalists. He recounts the prodigious array of privileges—a good salary, a maid, a secretary, a chauffeur—which make an assignment to Moscow a journalistic plum. Such material incentives, coupled with the promise of access to government officials and "inside" information, work to induce in Western correspondents the deadly habits of caution and self-limitation. In this way, Amalrik notes, "Although the Soviets cannot control foreign journalists, they can and do to some degree control the information foreign correspondents send abroad...." Western embassies cooperate in this endeavor, by acting "as a restraining force, trying to persuade journalists not to write anything that would displease the Soviet authorities."

IN Amalrik's view, the behavior of the journalists and embassies is part and parcel of the entire ethos of détente. For him, the Nixon administration, and Henry Kissinger in particular,

> understood very well the military and political factors accounting for the USSR's advantage over the West. Yet it was [Kissinger] who became the most consistent in personifying the West's will (which might rather be called a lack of will) to preserve the status quo. And what détente boiled down to was that the USSR had to be bought off so that it would not aggravate the world situation.

Yet for the Soviet Union détente proved to be something else again. "In détente," Amalrik writes, "the USSR saw not only an opportunity to avoid internal reforms with the

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help of Western credits, technology, and grain, but a chance to weaken the ties among the Western countries."

It has always been one argument among proponents of détente that it creates more favorable conditions for dissent. To this argument Amalrik's memoir offers an effective answer. What it reveals is that Soviet authorities have dealt with internal dissent according to the requirements of a single abiding need, the need to control a society that is a potential powderkeg. At best the short-term fate of Soviet dissidents is independent of the Western line, whether that be "hard" or "soft." And as for their long-term fate, Amalrik is unequivocal in his belief that the interests of democracy in the USSR will not be advanced by any Western strategy whose effect is to help stabilize a failing Soviet economic and social system.

Notes of a Revolutionary appears at what can only be regarded as a bleak moment in the history of Soviet dissent. Most leading proponents of democratic change (Andrei Sakharov, Yuri Orlov, Anatoly Shcharansky, and Mykola Rudenko among them) are in prison or in exile. The Helsinki monitoring group in Moscow has announced its dissolution; its ranks have been depleted by repression, and anyway the ideas embodied in the Helsinki accords (increased East-West contacts, economic cooperation, and respect for human rights by the Soviet bloc) are dead. The brutal crackdown against Poland's Solidarity labor movement likewise stands as a clear warning to dissident Soviet trade unionists of what their future might hold.

Yet as Amalrik's book usefully reminds us, the Soviet democratic movement has gone through previous cycles of repression only to emerge again. Hopes may have been dashed by the suppression of Solidarity, but similar hopes were dashed by the crushing of the Prague Spring in 1968, just prior to the great flowering of the dissident movement. In 1972-73 an extensive crackdown in Moscow and in the Ukraine suggested to many observers that the human-rights movement was on the verge of extinction, yet by 1976 Helsinki monitoring groups had emerged in Russia, the Ukraine, Armenia, Georgia, and Lithuania, and by 1977 a nascent independent trade-union movement had been formed.

That each of these groups has once more been repressed is true, but it is equally true that new ones continue to spring up. Although the community of Soviet dissidents is rather small and weak, it is worth remembering, with Amalrik, that the dissident movement is not only "one of the chief indicators of ferment in Soviet society," it is "also one of the fermentation agents." As Amalrik remarks: "Lots of flour, and only a little yeast; but it's the yeast that makes the dough rise." With this proposition many in the Soviet government clearly concur.

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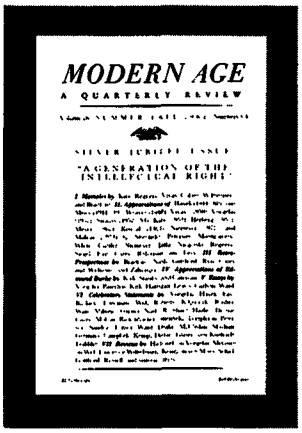

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A Free Man?

DISSENTER IN ZION: FROM THE WRITINGS OF JUDAH L. MAGNES. Edited by ARTHUR A. GOREN. *Harvard University Press. 554 pp. $30.00.*

Reviewed by JULIUS WEINBERG

THE publication of this selection from the writings and addresses of Judah L. Magnes, a prominent American rabbi and Zionist leader who served for almost a quarter of a century as head of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and as a consistent opponent of Jewish statehood, comes at an opportune moment. *Dissenter in Zion,* edited by Arthur A. Goren of the Hebrew University, provides a full introduction to one of modern Jewry's most interesting and controversial figures, whose life and career have a particular relevance to our own time.

Magnes was born in Oakland, California, in 1877, to a somewhat bookish East European father and an upwardly striving Central European mother. In what was, perhaps, an effort to satisfy both parents, Magnes enrolled in 1895 at the Hebrew Union College, the rabbinical seminary of the Reform movement, and graduated, with a distinguished academic record, five years later. Following his ordination, he spent two years in Germany where he acquired a Ph.D. in Semitics and philosophy, and one year as a member of the Hebrew Union College faculty. In 1904, Magnes entered Jewish life in New York where he embarked on a career as a rabbi (briefly), as a Zionist and communal leader, and as a spokesman for the numerous melioristic causes he felt to be important to the survival of American and world Jewry.

As Goren's volume makes amply clear, Magnes possessed qualifications that should have made for success in whatever career he chose to pursue. Attractive, articulate, and persuasive, he moved easily and gracefully in circles of power and affluence. His marriage to Beatrice Lowenstein, a sister to the wife of Louis Marshall, a lawyer and (as president of the American Jewish Committee) spokesman for the German-Jewish patricians in the United States, gave Magnes access to the coterie of philanthropists—the Schiffs, the Warburgs, the Lehmans—who wielded considerable influence on Jewish affairs at home and abroad. But he also established a close rapport with the new Jewish immigrant leadership from Russo-Poland, whose socialist and Zionist beliefs he shared and toward whose attachment to traditional Judaism he was sympathetic.

This catholicity of belief and practice was typical of Magnes. From the moment he entered Jewish life to the very end, he sought to forge a way of life—through rituals, deeds, and institutions—that would enable Jews to identify with and support one another: a Jewish cosmopolitanism, as it were, that would both unify and exalt the Jewish people in the modern world. In his role as a rabbi, this impulse led to frustration and disenchantment; in other roles, both in New York and later in Palestine, it brought Magnes a measure of fulfillment.

THE three rabbinic posts held by Magnes between 1904 and 1912—Temple Israel in downtown Brooklyn, and Temple Emanu-El and Congregation B' nai Jeshurun in Manhattan—were all prestigious and financially rewarding. Unfortunately, Magnes found himself unhappy and frustrated in all three. His growing outspokenness as a Zionist tended to make him ideologically unpalatable to the German-Jewish clientele he served. These differences were compounded by the fervor (or, depending on one's point of view, the naiveté) of his growing traditionalism and by his simultaneous commitment to social and economic reform. Magnes summed up much of this in a letter to his family when he made his decision to resign as rabbi of Temple Israel. "Yesterday," he wrote, "I was invited to a meeting of the board.... Without much notice Mr. Abraham [of the Abraham & Straus department store] delivered a tirade against me, the upshot of which was that I was too active in Zionism, that I was too conservative in my Judaism, and that I associated too much with revolutionists."

What his congregants found unpalatable in Magnes were the very elements that enabled him to provide effective leadership of the New York Kehillah in the second decade of the century. The Kehillah, founded in 1909 as an anti-defamation organization, served for a time as an all-embracing community council for New York's Jews. With Magnes as the broker between the uptown philanthropists and the downtown immigrants, the Kehillah made several contributions to the quality of Jewish life in New York City, particularly in the field of Jewish education. Within half a decade, however, despite Magnes's valiant efforts, the Kehillah was moribund—the victim of inadequate funding, ideological and subethnic division, religious intolerance, and personality clashes among the figures dominating Jewish communal life.

The Kehillah was an idea whose time had not yet come. Magnes had had a vision of the "corporate community"—humane, efficient, and sensitive to ongoing Jewish needs—which American Jewry came to create only after World War II. In the first decades of the century, Jewish life in New York was too vibrant, varied, and quarrelsome to be contained by the bureaucratic structure, however well-meaning, that Magnes helped to establish and lead.

WITH the Kehillah in decline, Magnes turned increasingly to international issues, applying to this larger arena the same principles of universalism and egalitarianism he had espoused for the Jewish community of New York. At the root of Magnes's thought was the need to carry out what he saw as "the prophetic tradition" in Judaism. This concept, a driving force in early 19th-century Reform, imposed upon Jews, "the international people," the responsibility "to aid the world in achieving justice and peace." For Magnes this translated into advocacy of the socialist critique of Western capitalism; pacifism and opposition to American entry into World War I; and support for the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia.

JULIUS WEINBERG *teaches at Cleveland State University and writes on American and Jewish history.*

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Although he continued in these years to take an interest in Jewish affairs, Magnes's hostility to "the bourgeois group in Jewish affairs," and his belief that "Bolshevism holds out the ideal . . . of a social commonwealth based upon justice," isolated him to a degree from the centers of power and influence, and finally put an end to his career on the American Jewish scene. In 1922, with the rabbinate and other suitable posts either unavailable or unattractive to him, Magnes left the United States for Palestine, where, for the next quarter of a century, he would apply the principles of "prophetic Judaism" to the growing tensions among the Jews, the Arabs, and the British.

IN PALESTINE, where he served first as chancellor and then as president of the newly founded Hebrew University, Magnes did battle both with Chaim Weizmann, who (according to Magnes) wanted the university to serve the Zionist cause, and with Albert Einstein, who felt that under Magnes's leadership the university was failing to realize the goals of scholarship and research required of a first-rate institution of higher learning. Whatever his shortcomings as a scholar and administrator, however, the accomplishments of Magnes in these decades before Israel and its institutions became the ruling passion of American Jewry were many. His goal was the creation of a great center of learning—and this the Hebrew University undeniably became.

It was during these same years that Magnes became known, above all, for his opposition to the *political* fulfillment of the Zionist dream. He was a founder and leader of B'rit Shalom, a minuscule but ideologically significant group that also included Martin Buber, Henrietta Szold, and other Westernized Zionists who preached Arab-Jewish reconciliation and who favored the establishment in Palestine of a binational state offering equal political status to both Jews and Arabs. Magnes's enthusiasm for this idea led him to disparage the Balfour Declaration with its promise of a Jewish homeland, to rationalize Arab violence against Jews in the 1920's and 30's, to favor limitations

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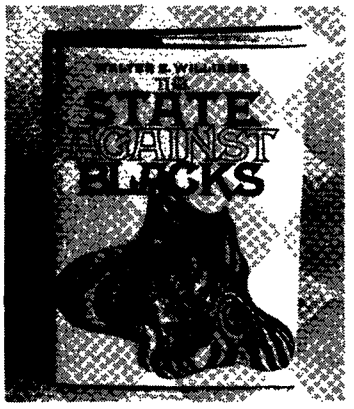

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on Jewish immigration into Palestine, and to condemn actions taken by Jews against the British in Palestine after World War II.

By 1947-48, after the B'rit Shalom position had been abandoned by all but the most obdurate, Magnes continued—in both Palestine and in New York—to lobby at an obsessive pitch against the establishment or recognition of a Jewish state. His activities brought him into alliance with the leaders of the rabidly anti-Zionist Council for American Judaism; with anti-Semitic or anti-Zionist figures in American public life; and with such church-related, pro-Arab groups as the Committee for Peace and Justice in the Holy Land. They also led to a final parting of ways with cherished friends who had for some time been persuaded by Arab intransigence that their old dreams of a binational state had been utterly illusory, and who recognized that only a Jewish state could provide the means for rescuing the survivors of the Holocaust.

Death came to Magnes in October 1948, shortly after the state of Israel was established. In his last journal entry, on October 22, Magnes spoke of the need for a Marshall Plan for the entire Middle East, expressing the characteristically visionary hope that "through economic aid [there will be] some chance of peace, otherwise war and hatred for decades."

WHATEVER assessment is made of Magnes's role in recent Jewish history, it is fortunate that his literary legacy has been left to a scholar of Arthur Goren's stature, who brings to his task both objectivity and compassion. Apart from the impeccable rendering of the documents in this handsome volume, Goren has contributed a number of immensely useful biographical and historical introductions; his glossaries and indices similarly help to provide encyclopedic information concerning the men and women who took part in the affairs of world Jewry in the first half of the 20th century. Most importantly, Goren has not intruded on the integrity of his subject, and allows the reader to take a full measure of the man in all his complexity.

Among the luminaries of 20th-century Jewish life, Magnes will be remembered on many counts, and not least as the embodiment of a host of personal and ideological contradictions. The late Gershom Scholem called Magnes an "'*adam hofshi*—a free man' . . . that rare person, free of dogmas and slogans, who steadfastly pursues a politics of high principles as he understands it. . . ." But there is another view that emerges from this volume, and that is of Magnes as a quintessential Diaspora Jew, one who incorporated in his life, in a particularly salient manner, several of the self-contradictory commitments fashioned by Jews in their struggle with modernity. Gifted, sensitive, humane, enigmatic, Magnes can be seen, above all, as a marginal man, as the embodiment of the very condition which the Zionism he believed in—albeit not fully—was intended to cure. His type is with us still.

Easy Choices

ETHICS (AND OTHER LIABILITIES). By HARRY STEIN. *St. Martin's Press. 168 pp. $10.95.*

Reviewed by NAOMI MUNSON

WHEN Harry Stein, who is now in his mid-thirties, was invited to write a column on ethics for *Esquire* three years ago, he felt unworthy of the task. In college he had opted for a course in Social Problems over Ethics; he was, moreover, "a congenital exaggerator" and had even been known to tell an occasional lie. Who was *he* to discourse on right and wrong?

But Stein was determined not to let such qualms stand in his way. "I'd have preferred," he confesses in his introduction to this collection of his columns, "to be given a humor column. . . . But if this was the one they'd handed me, I was damn well going to make the best of it." And make the best of it he did, turning out an article every month for two years, and becoming thereby the conscience of the floundering generation of the 60's, those ever idealistic young people now lost in the morally arid world of the 70's and 80's.

Somewhere along the way, Stein discovered that there was more to ethics than he had anticipated. "All at once," he explains, "there seemed a right and a wrong to everything—and an obligation to act on that knowledge." While some of Stein's friends found his new obsession decidedly irritating—particularly when they saw themselves cited in his columns as illustrations of ethical laxity—the reaction from the great public was rewarding. There was, for example, a letter from a "young mother wondering how to keep her child untainted by racism"; and another from a woman "whose husband . . . had been blacklisted and who never thought she'd live to see the day when ideals and idealism made the pages of a national magazine." A most telling testimony to the appeal of his column was the proliferation of T-shirts bearing the legend, "But what would *Harry Stein* do?" Such support sustained the author through the months of grappling with life's tough questions.

STEIN began his career as an ethicist at *Esquire*—and he begins his book—by taking a hard look at what he calls kissing ass. "The syndrome becomes apparent," he writes, "as early as the third grade. There's always . . . that one wimp, whose arm is constantly in the air, straining so desperately to please that it looks as if it might pop out of its socket." It becomes even more apparent in college and, of course, in the working world, where "almost everyone is looking for an edge. . . ." The syndrome seems to affect even the likes of John Glenn, Walter Mondale, and "old Ed Muskie," who made a public display of themselves trekking down to Plains to pay homage to Jimmy Carter in the hope of being tapped for the Vice Presidency. While Stein finds it "hard to argue" with a friend's view that "'Sycophancy is what keeps America moving,'" he concludes that it is nevertheless difficult to "remain . . . independent, self-de-

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NAOMI MUNSON's *reviews and essays have appeared in the* Wall Street Journal, *the* American Spectator, *and other periodicals.*

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termined, pure" while "tailoring one's behavior to fit the tastes of others." Kissing ass, then, is ultimately bad for the soul.

Equally detrimental to spiritual purity is stealing. Stein's "thinking on the subject had been shaped early, by [his] mother . . . a warm, blunt, humorous ex-Communist with an unyielding view of the proper order. . . . Stealing . . . was for degenerates—something a politician's kids might do, not hers." And, indeed, little Harry never did steal—until one day he was falsely accused in a toy store. Less than two weeks later, he was embarked on a career as a random—and very minor—shoplifter.

His "life in crime" was brought to an abrupt conclusion when, years later, a college graduate, he was arrested in Paris for lifting a magazine. "[H]onesty turned out to be a habit," and Stein never stole again; he never even cheated on his expense account. "Financially," he admits, "this may have been imprudent, but it at least enabled me to blast Richard Nixon . . . with an uncluttered conscience."

STEIN'S conscience is not quite so uncluttered when it comes to abortion. After experiencing "our abortion . . . the talk and the tears; the self-doubts and doubts about each other," he and his girlfriend "at last learned the melancholy lesson that hundreds of thousands of others who like to think of themselves as progressive had learned before us: that abortion cannot be viewed exclusively, or even primarily, as a political issue." The apparent ease with which others decide to abort unwanted pregnancies, or to remain barren altogether, leads Stein to the "inescapable" conclusion that "we postwar kids, the most indulged youngsters in the history of the planet, have grown into the most profoundly selfish generation of adults."

Let it not be thought, however, that Stein would wish to impose these particular views of his on anyone else. In making the decision to have or not to have children, he explains, "nobody's values should matter except one's own."

The necessity of making choices is not limited to one's personal life. There is also the matter of electing our political leaders. Sadly, in Stein's view, this process in America often boils down to a question of "choosing among evils." American politicians, it seems, are for the most part repositories of "[i]gnorance, shortsightedness, and provincialism." Witness a 1968 *Esquire* survey which revealed that favorite films among Congressmen and Senators were *Gone With the Wind*, *Dr. Zhivago*, and *The Sound of Music*, and that many saw their chief political influences as their fathers, grandfathers, and colleagues. Compared with such third-rate minds, politicians in Italy (as Stein learned from Oriana Fallaci) "are all Einsteins and Shakespeares."

Still, even in America there is the occasional pearl among the sand pebbles—notably Henry Wallace

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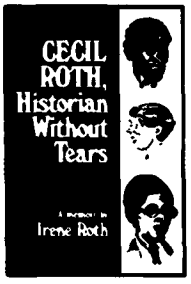

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and Adlai Stevenson. Responsibility for the failures of these beacons among men must be laid at the door of universal suffrage, according to a friend of Stein. "There are," this friend opines, "too many ill-informed people voting." But if restricted suffrage is an idea whose time has not yet come, Stein does not lose heart. It is enough for him that there are those who still toil on, despite the failures of their Henrys, their Adlais, and their Genes. Such perseverance deserves admiration, perhaps even emulation. As yet another friend reminds Stein, in one of their favorite aphorisms from days gone by, "If you're not part of the solution, you're part of the problem."

THIS book signals Stein's intention to be part of the solution. Unfortunately, the problem he seeks to address is not accessible to his capacities. For, despite its title, this book lacks even the most elementary moral discrimination and is devoid of even the most minimal ethical vision.

The author's position on the baser human tendencies is that they are undesirable because they exact too high a spiritual and psychological price; even adultery, in Stein's view, is to be avoided simply because it "makes most everyone involved feel rotten." This is to reject the very essence of ethics, namely, that a standard of right and wrong, good and evil, must exist independently of the individual; and it is to deny the very essence of morality, namely, that ethical standards must guide behavior irrespective of personal feeling.

Nor does Stein's conviction that the moral failings he discusses are fostered and sustained by such external forces as the political, economic, and social system of the United States bespeak a sincere preoccupation with ethical issues. Any serious attempt to deal with such issues must begin with the recognition that they are of universal—and thus peculiarly internal—significance.

Stein's work, in short, far from adding anything to the understanding of life's complexities, is no more than a rehashing in moralized language of the standard pieties dished up by magazines like *Esquire*. That this rehashing should be proffered—and received—as a discussion of ethics is, perhaps, only to be expected from people who have become accustomed to viewing their own thoughts and feelings as the ultimate criteria of judgment on every subject under the sun.

In this sense, Harry Stein might indeed be considered the quintessential ethical voice of his class and of his generation—those 60's paragons now creeping toward middle age, always on the lookout for new reasons to think well of themselves.

Schooling for All

THE PAIDEIA PROPOSAL: AN EDUCATIONAL MANIFESTO. By MORTIMER J. ADLER. *Macmillan. 84 pp. $6.95 hardcover; $2.95 paper.*

Reviewed by SAMUEL LIPMAN

IN THE course of a writing career going back more than fifty years, Mortimer Adler has told us *How to Read a Book* (1940), *How to Think About War and Peace* (1944), and *How to Think About God* (1980). Now he has turned his attention to the reform if not the complete restructuring of American elementary and secondary education.

True to his own preferences in working style—he has led such vast collaborative projects as the Great Books publication program; the efforts of the Institute for Philosophical Research to define exhaustively leading ideas such as freedom; and, most recently, the current edition of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*—Adler appears here as spokesman for a group of pedagogic notables. Known as the Paideia Group, its members include Jacques Barzun, Clifton Fadiman, and Theodore Sizer, the former headmaster of Phillips Academy, Andover. On the supporting list are several names from the Institute for Philosophical Research, the Aspen Institute for Hu-

SAMUEL LIPMAN, COMMENTARY*'s regular music critic, is publisher of the* New Criterion, *a new monthly cultural review.*

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manistic Studies, and the Great Books concept in its academic manifestations.

Notwithstanding the appearance of joint labor, this small book is vintage Adler. It begins, as Adler so likes to do, with an admirably inclusive definition of the audience he is addressing: parents, teachers, school boards, college educators, elected public officials, employers, minority groups, labor leaders, military leaders, and American citizens. For Adler, all these groups are deeply concerned, each for its own reasons, with the future of public education. To deal with this concern, Adler suggests measures "to improve the opportunities of our youth, the prospects of our economy, and the viability of our democratic institutions . . . [all to] be achieved at the community level without resorting to a monolithic, national educational system."

THE Adler proposals start with twelve years of universal schooling. He follows John Dewey (to whom the book is dedicated, along with Horace Mann and Adler's old associate, Robert Hutchins) in believing that in a democratic society we must give children not only the same quantity but also the same quality of public education. Yet in this pursuit, Adler asserts, we have failed: we are not an educationally classless society. By separating children into the academically educable and the intellectually hopeless, we have perpetuated a "hypocrisy in our national life." Adler, who is strongly against vocational training in secondary schools, finds "every child educable up to his or her capacity. Educable—not just trainable for jobs!" This education must be based on the principle that "the best education for the best is the best education for all."

Two chapter titles convey in themselves much of Adler's intention: "The Same Objectives for All" and "The Same Course of Study for All." The objectives are personal growth and self-improvement, citizenship, and preparation for earning a living. What is taught must be general and liberal, nonspecialized and nonvocational; it must be, "in several, crucial, overarching respects, one and the same for every child." Pre-college elective choices in courses are to be eliminated, with the exception of some variation in the study of a second language.

Adler illustrates his curriculum in a diagram divided into three columns: Acquisition of Knowledge, Development of Skill, and Enlargement of the Understanding. Knowledge (in the basic academic discipline) is to be acquired through lectures, textbooks, and student responses thereto. Skills—including skills of learning—are to be developed through coaching and drill. Enlarged Understanding—of ideas and values—is to develop through "Socratic questioning and active participation." The goals for all are to be set high.

While Adler emphasizes skills, his heart clearly lies in his third col-

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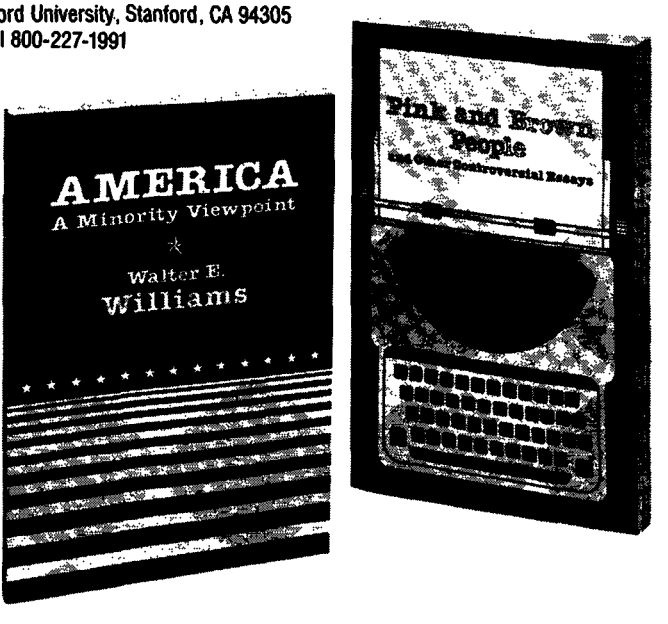

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umn, Enlargement of the Understanding. Here is the essence of the Great Books Program: learning to be at home among the leading ideas through the reading of masterworks and the directed discussion of their contents. In the arts and literature, for example, Adler writes:

> Music and other works of art can be dealt with in seminars in which ideas are discussed; but, like poetry and fiction, they need an additional treatment in order to be appreciated aesthetically—to be enjoyed and admired for their excellence. In this connection, exercises in the performance and composition of poetry, music, and visual works, as well as the production of dramatic works, will help develop that appreciation in the most direct manner.

ADLER has anticipated the argument that most children are not capable of responding to intellectual demands so intensive and many. Not only does he state that students will rise to meet challenges that are properly offered to them, he also proposes wide efforts at "preschool tutelage" to remedy "initial impediments." About ineradicable individual differences he is sanguine, basing his attitude upon the Aristotelian and Thomist conceptions he has long espoused:

> Despite their manifold individual differences, the children are all the same in their human nature. They are human beings and their human equality consists in the fact that no child is more or less human than another. . . . They all have the same inherent tendencies, the same inherent powers, the same inherent capacities. . . . Individual differences are always and only differences in degree, never differences in kind.

Crucial to the success of these educational plans is the quality of school learning, which Adler indeed calls "The Heart of the Matter." Adler finds teachers at the heart of this heart, as "aids in the process of learning by discovery, not as knowers who attempt to put the knowledge they have in their minds into the minds of their pupils." He writes:

> The teacher's role in discussion is to keep it going along fruitful lines by moderating, guiding, correcting, leading, and arguing like one more *student*! The teacher is first among equals.

This is hardly to say that Adler believes in permissiveness. He is firm about the need for discipline in the classroom, going so far as to invoke the once-banned word, "deportment." Though he does not go into the details of punishment, he states clearly that "Infraction of rules of conduct . . . must be effectively dealt with" and that "Disturbing the peace is a serious matter in school as it is on the street—perhaps even more serious."

In the first of two short concluding chapters Adler assigns a large part of the blame for the poor school performance of some minority-group children to the fact that they can only look forward "to unemployment after leaving school—thrown on the waste heap of a society that is squandering its human resources. Hopelessness about the future is bound to affect motivation in school." For the present plight of education, he also blames parents who, in wishing material blessings for their children, neglect what these children need "to make themselves the best human beings they are capable of becoming." To remedy both the hopelessness and the materialism, he asks a commitment on the part of society to a full-employment policy, and a realization by parents that the goals of basic schooling are "not just earning a living, but living well." In the final chapter, Adler returns to the interrelationship among proper education, citizenship, and democracy. For him universal schooling and universal suffrage go hand in hand; without the former, the latter is an impossibility.

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It cannot be denied that Adler's proposals, so noble in motive and far-reaching in purpose (as Herbert Hoover said about Prohibition), contain much that will be attractive to anyone looking for seriousness in education. Many Americans are disturbed at the turning of our public schools into tax-funded day-care centers for intellectually idle children; many too are opposed to the importation into school curricula of every social and technological fad. The level of reading material assigned to students has dropped alarmingly over the past generation, and the idea of a common discourse based on an approach to high culture has been replaced by enforced acquaintance with the artifacts of popular entertainment. Minority-group parents are concerned about the inability of schools to lift their children out of a social quagmire. Discipline still remains an unsolved —and perhaps unexplored—problem across the entire school population.

BUT while Mortimer Adler does in fact address all these concerns, he does so in a way at once unpleasantly commanding in its tone and glibly superficial in its content. In *The Paideia Proposal*, as elsewhere in his writings, he proceeds as if realities which to the rest of us seem barely amenable to intellectual analysis are capable of being wholly subsumed in short, punchy arguments which do not admit (at least for Adler) of contradiction.

Thus, his linkage of universal schooling with universal suffrage depends on an unproved assertion that higher education leads to political wisdom; the history of totalitarianism and of its supporters would surely qualify that assertion. Similarly, his statement that giving children the same quantity of public education means that we must also give them the same quality of education would seem to play on the two meanings of the word quality —both virtue and kind. And what are we to make of his statement that "every child [is] educable up to his or her capacity"? Can this be more than a truism, stating little else than what is, is?

"Capacity" itself is surely more than just a matter of the ability to do things better or worse. Capacity also involves talent and interest. Scientists begin young, with intensive concentration in their field of interest; so do musicians, dancers, great athletes, mathematicians, and even chess players. Is it proper to force all these gifted and dedicated individuals into the Procrustean bed of a mandated curriculum?

In any case, as every teacher knows, positing goals is not the same thing as reaching them. Adler speaks of universal education as including not only the creation of musical, dramatic, and poetic works, but also the mastery of "at least one year of calculus." This seems to assume that all will be well if only the determination of society (and teachers) is matched by the availability of undifferentiated, raw stu-

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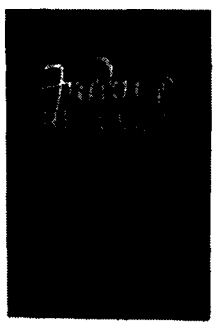

Freedom and Reform
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By Frank H. Knight
Foreword by James M. Buchanan

Fifteen essays, first collected in 1947, treating social, political, economic, and philosophical problems from Frank Knight's characteristic perspective. Professor Knight (1885–1972), author of the economic classic, *Risk, Uncertainty and Profit* (1921), taught economics for many years at the University of Chicago.

In the Foreword Professor James M. Buchanan says of Knight, "He possessed the elementary gumption to stake out his intellectual-moral position unawed by either the 'wisdom of the ages' or the potential censure of his peers in the academy. He was willing to acknowledge his own vulnerability to error, and when he was confused, he was not reluctant to say so." Hardcover $14.00, Paperback $6.50.

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dent material. One may be permitted one's doubts.

Despite Adler's concern with democracy and democratic education, his presentation is marked by an ignoring of private schooling and a bias against diversity and free choice by both parents and students. He justifies preschool tutoring, for example, with the following argument:

> A democratic society, defined as an ideal to be approximated, is one in which all, being equal in their humanity, enjoy equality of treatment. But in actuality a democratic society is limited in its ability to effect such equality. It can do so only through the public agencies it is able to finance and over which it can exercise some control.

He is willing to use the mighty engine of the state to affect what many in our society view as private relationships:

> The inequality of homes produces inequalities of nurture that lead some to draw wrong conclusions about the abilities of children. . . . The sooner a democratic society intervenes to remedy the cultural inequality of homes and environments, the sooner it will succeed in fulfilling the democratic mandate of equal educational opportunity for all.

Perhaps the most beguiling aspect of Adler's program is his advocacy of education in the humanities. For him, of course, this humanistic education means the Great Books; he has devoted most of his life to just these works and just this approach to them. But even here, his own taste, as he himself describes it in his autobiographical *Philosopher at Large* (1977), seems both narrow and exclusionary:

> To say, as I have said, that I have not learned a single fundamental truth from the writings of modern philosophers is not to say that I have learned nothing at all from them. With the exception of Hegel and other post-Kantian German philosophers, I have read their works with both pleasure and profit. The pleasure has come from the perception of errors the serious consequences of which tend to reinforce my hold on the truths I have learned from Aristotle and Aquinas. The profit has come from the perception of new but genuine problems, not the pseudo-problems, perplexities, and puzzlements invented by therapeutic positivism and by linguistic or analytical philosophy in our own century.

In one area, at least, Adler has indeed gone beyond his own reading of his philosophical masters; he now views democracy as "the only perfectly just form of government." But his conception of democratic society is a curious one, and would seem to carry unhappy implications for both politics and culture. Marring much of his work is a strange reliance on the word *all*: "the best education for *all*," "the same objectives for *all*," "the same course of study for *all*."

Here perhaps is the key not only to *The Paideia Proposal* but to Adler's wider thinking as well. His goal is not the sheltering of diversity, the acceptance of choice and individual difference which has marked the growth of the American Republic. Instead he seems to envision the polity, no less than the course of general education, as an academic seminar writ large, with a leader, "first among equals" but nonetheless first, and all the rest sitting at their desks with notebooks open and minds at the ready. This vision may evoke something out of Orwell, but it hardly suggests the Founding Fathers.

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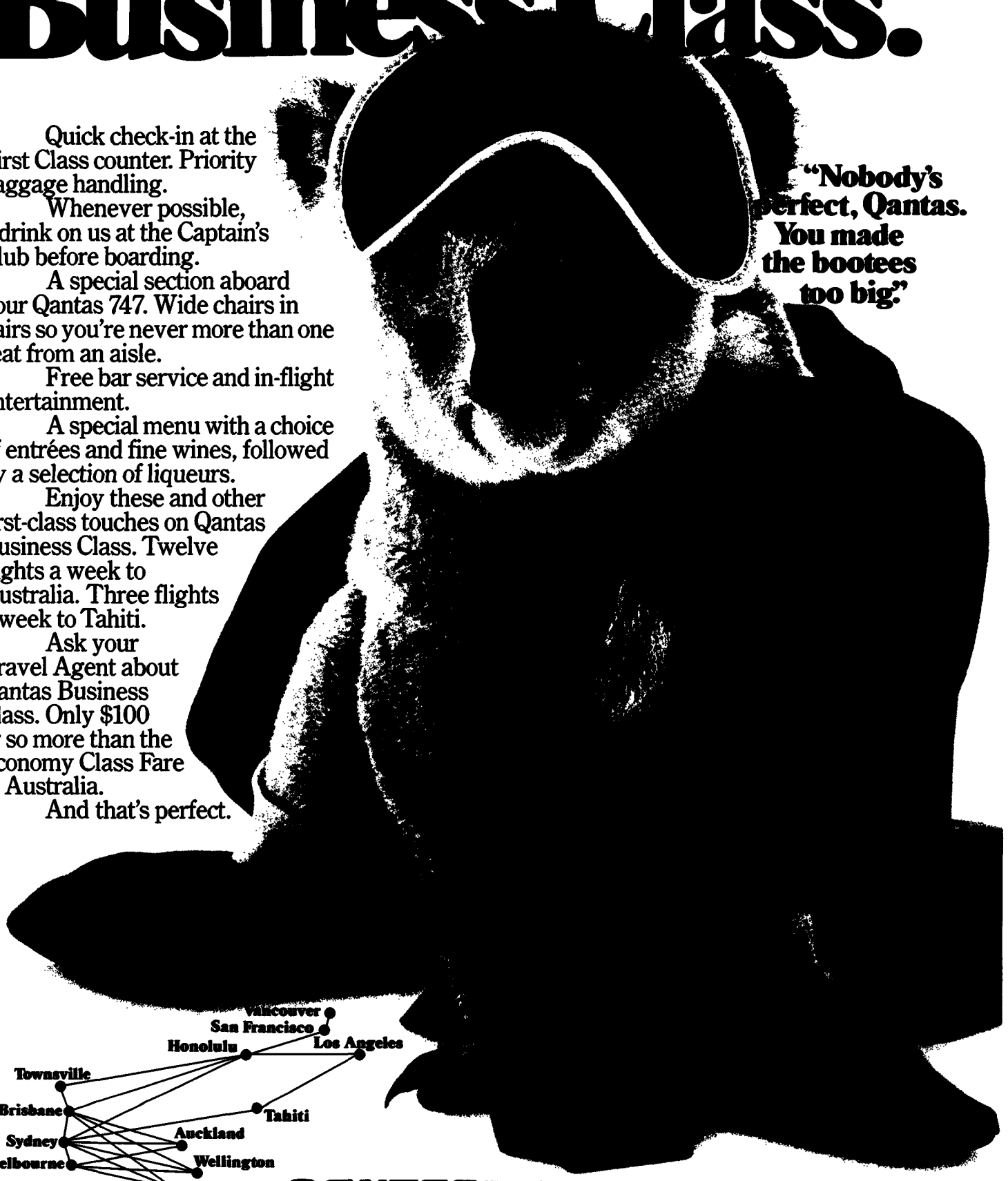

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